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#39

OF MONEY, MIRTH & MUTANTS
WALT & LOUISE SIMONSON
A WACKY INTERVIEW

MYSTERIOUS MR. X MENTOR
DEAN MOTTER
HIS SECRET ORIGIN

FROM ALPHA FLIGHT TO WORDSMITH WITH
ROSS & DARRIGO
A DIALOGUE WITH DUAL DAVES

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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A FICTIONEER PUBLICATION

M·I·C·R·A
MIND CONTROLLED REMOTE AUTOMATON
SHE COULD SAVE AMERICA—
OR DESTROY IT!
THE MOST TERRIFYING
WEAPON EVER CREATED...
COMICS INTERVIEW
PUBLICATION
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If you like ELFQUEST, you're bound to enjoy MICRA--a new bi-monthly comic book. This 12-issue limited series forms a science fiction novel of epic proportions, clearly told with sensitive writing by Lamar Waldron and beautiful art by Ted Boonthanakit. In MICRA, you won't find superheroes or characters based on toys--just fascinating men and women caught up in a complex, dangerous world.

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"Lamar has created a detailed future world, built on present-day trends, in which the upper castes of society live in pollution-free domed cities while the rebellious lower castes live outside, amid the hazardous wastes of modern man. The heroine, a spoiled, rich, young woman, is crippled in a terrorist attack and is given the opportunity to be useful by controlling an experimental MInd Controlled Remote Automaton, a powerful robotic duplicate.

"There is an awful lot more to it than that, including several subplots only hinted at in the first issue, but you should discover those joys for yourself. I heartily recommend it."

STAN LEE, the most popular comics writer in history, says:

"I think the story's terrific! It reads like a movie. I usually haven't the time or patience to wade through these things, but I read every word of MICRA! It's a really good job. Excelsior!"

Like ELFQUEST, MICRA has won praise from authors outside comics, like RAY BRADBURY. Now's the time you should try MICRA, while you can start from the beginning.

MICRA #2 is on sale now. MICRA #1 may still be available in some areas. But don't worry--if you can't find the first issue, we've included a complete recap in MICRA #2.

The cover of MICRA #3, which ships the last week of January

M·I·C·R·A

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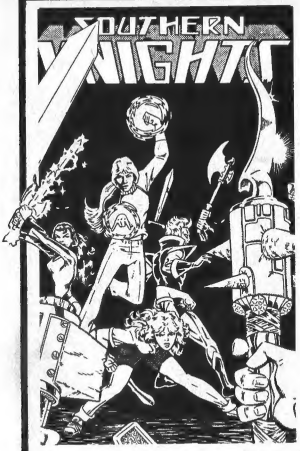

#17

The Southern Knights find themselves in a world of sword-and-sorcery.
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cover contributed by:
DEAN MOTTER
art & colors

UP FRONT

I've got a great idea for a new superhero. He's got round shoulders, golden curls and a gentle face. What, you say — no Rambo? Maybe not, but just such a hero lives in David Anthony Kraft's hallway — Jan of the Jungle, painted in the 1930s by **Robert A. Graef**, cover artist for ARGOSY, sort of the John Byrne of his day. Jan of the Jungle was designed to answer the call for Hero in his time as much as the X-Men were designed to fit the current need. Standards change. Take Wolverine — can you see him in Lee and Kirby's original Marvel Universe? A guy whp'd just as soon rip your throat out as give you a dime for a cuppa coffee? Unimaginable as Hero, he'd have seemed worse than Dr. Doom!

AS our world view changes, so does our need for heroes. I never thought I'd see the day when Magneto's greatest struggle was how to avoid bruising tender adolesent feelings. Today's Spider-Man owes more to DALLAS and DYNASTY than to Ditko's drawing board. Or compare Barry Smith's Conan to Arnold Schwarznegger's.

In this age of computerization and behavior modification we all secretly hope for some mighty new Hero to burst forth and grip us from within, the way Superman and Spider-Man once did. Every time I turn around, scores of superheroes get slaughtered wholesale, and new ones pop up like mushrooms to take their place — but all the super powers in Creation don't amount to a hill of beans unless you've got a human being with a *soul* inside.

I long for a Hero to help clear away the debris and guide us through the world, instead of tearing it apart.

— Mark Borax
Managing Editor

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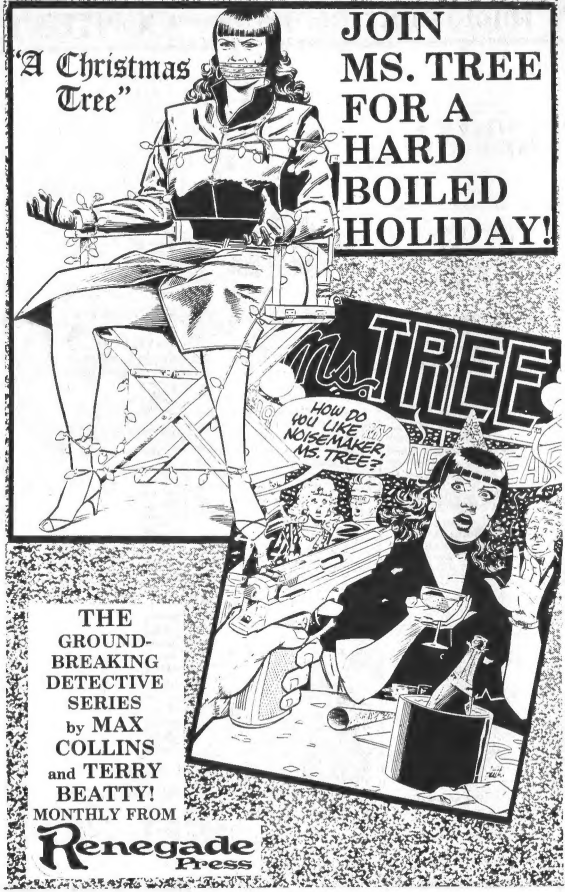
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"I think super heroes are a dead end."

J. MARC DeMATTEIS

Last issue, Marc discussed the beginning of his writing career as a record critic for ROLLING STONE and a writer of horror and mystery stories for DC, where he created "I, Vampire" and the unforgettable Creature Commandos. This issue, Marc describes what happened when he moved over to Marvel...

MIKE HIGGINS: Wasn't your first work for Marvel the XANADU adaptation?

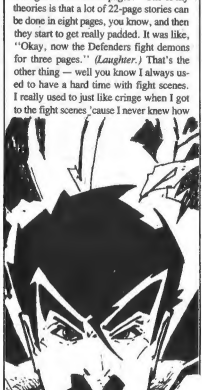
MARC: Oh, yes, it was. *(Laughter.)* The less said about that the better. I didn't want to mention that. It wasn't my fault. They had 550 artists on that, plus that movie... First of all, the first version of the film script was better. I wrote a whole script based on that first version. Then they said, "Oh, they made some changes in the script," and they gave me a script that the movie people had changed — made it really bad. Anything that was interesting in the film they took out — and so I had to downgrade my script. So, it wasn't a good movie to begin with, and they had 500 artists on it. That was the first thing from Marvel that came out with my name on it — but luckily no one bought it so it didn't matter.

JIM: SALICRUP: *According to Jim Shooter, no movie adaptation, including XANADU, has ever lost money.*

MARC: Really?

MIKE HIGGINS: What I think was great was I did a movie adaptation of ROCK AND RULE and the movie never came out. The book sold 25% on the newsstands. The movie never even came out — so people just buy Marvel.

MARC: Anyway, I was kind of thrust into these three books a month, full-length books. I didn't realize it at the time but looking back in retrospect I definitely floundered a bit. It was like, "Wow! What am I gonna do with 22 pages?" One of my theories is that a lot of 22-page stories can be done in eight pages, you know, and then they start to get really padded. It was like, "Okay, now the Defenders fight demons for three pages." *(Laughter.)* That's the other thing — well you know I always used to have a hard time with fight scenes. I really used to just like cringe when I got to the fight scenes 'cause I never knew how to handle them the right way 'cause they bored me personally. It took me a long time to find some way to get that interesting, and I really had to learn about that stuff on TEAM-UP, which was really *based* on all that stuff — to do these multi-level stories where I could satisfy me and still have the action and still have the humor and all that. That seems to be my pattern on everything that I did. I would do six or eight really awful issues and then find the book. Unfortunately, I didn't find CAPTAIN AMERICA until you weren't the editor anymore. *(Laughter.)*



JIM: *Well, these things happen.*

MARC: Those first six or eight CAPTAIN AMERICAs really sucked, too. Those were really terrible. But luckily I think I redeemed myself after that.

JIM: *But at least our CAPTAIN AMERICA sold very well.* (Laughter.)

MARC: They didn't stop selling well until I started getting royalty checks. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *You were doing the TEAM-UPs with Spider-Man. What was that like, to finally write Spider-Man stories?*

MARC: It was fun. The interesting thing was that I found I had more affinity for Spider-Man than I really thought I would, you know — considering that my favorite stuff was the really weird, offbeat kind of stories — which were generally the kind of stories that I did better. I really thought that I couldn't do that kind of mainstream character and do it well, But I thought overall I did a pretty good job on TEAM-

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"Stan Lee was a genius at creating

THE NEW DEFENDERS, in Marc's opinion a change for the worse because it made the unusual title a regular super hero comic.

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UP, and Spider-Man was fun. But there's just so far that I could go with it — just so far anybody can go with the team-up concept. I think I did it for two years, and two years of team-up is a lot of team-up. And like I said, I did the first six or eight issues where I was functioning under this dilemma of trying to find the book. MARVEL TEAM-UP, aside from a few bright spots here and there — **Claremont's** run comes to mind — was a pretty shitty comic, you know. I was functioning under this idea of what you have to do in a team-up comic, and then **Tom DeFalco** said, "Do whatever you want. Just make sure you have the action in there, but do the kind of stories that *you want*." **Herb Trimpe** was doing the book, and just when he left was when I found the book, you know, which was too bad 'cause I would have liked to have done some good stories for Herb. Just when **Kerry Gammill** came on I did a story with the Gargoyle which was one of my favorite *favorite* stories. Then I did about eight or ten TEAM-UPs that I really liked. Then I stayed on the book about three issues longer than I should have 'cause I burned out. I did this one with Herb — and it's always the ones that really suck that sell well, I noticed *(Laughter.)* — that I think was the worst story that I ever did. It was a two-part thing — one with Wolverine and one with Professor X — and they were awful because . . . I know somebody out there's going, "No, they weren't that bad." Maybe not. *(Laughter.)* When I say the stuff was awful I mean in terms of satisfying me. I'm not talking about the general quality of the book in relation to other comics or anything. Anyway, I just have no feeling at all for the New X-Men. They don't do anything for me, and they never did from the moment they appeared — it's a very well-done book, but those characters just never touched me — and Wolverine out of all of them is the one character that I liked or understood the least. Tom said, "Let's do Spider-Man and Wolverine." Suddenly, I had this Spider-Man and Wolverine story. I killed myself trying to come up with this one plot that I thought was okay. Tom said, "No, that didn't quite work. Try it again." Then I finally came up with one that pleased him and that I hated, you know — and of course it was a two-parter and the second part was even worse than the first. *(Laughter.)* But the Wolverine issue went through the roof, it sold so well — and of course, you know, that was the one that really sucked.

I found that on DEFENDERS, too. The stories that I liked the best were, once again, psychological fantasies — stories with characters like Devil-Slayer and Son of Satan who I really felt an affinity for. I sank my teeth into those characters and did these really meaty stories that nobody bought. I'd get like 14¢ in royalties, or whatever. And then we did this three-part Squadron Supreme story which had all the Defenders and all the members of the Squadron Supreme. It was a complicated story and when it was all over **Al Milgram** said, "Yeah, that was a little confusing, wasn't it?" I wished he would have told me when the story was going on — but, of course, those were the three best-selling issues of THE DEFENDERS until the New Defenders came along. I forgot where I started and where I was leading with this.

JIM: *What was it like to write Spider-Man?*

MARC: Oh, yeah. Overall I enjoyed it, but there was just so far I could go with it.

JIM: *Let's talk about the books one by one . . .*

MARC: Okay.

JIM: *DEFENDERS. How did that work out?*

MARC: DEFENDERS — I think as you can tell by now — I did some of my very best and my very worst work imaginable.

good children's literature."

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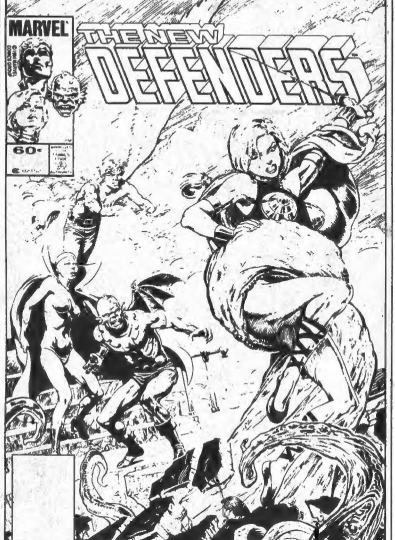
I'm amazed in retrospect at some of the good stories. The first half-a-dozen issues that I did comprised the "Six-Fingered Hand" story which brought in Son of Satan. I was so full of vampires and all this stuff from DC, and then I'm working on CONAN with all these demons; it took me about a year to de-demon myself. So all those early DEFENDERS were all full of this demonic stuff. I look back on it now and it's kind of like, to once again liken it to rock 'n' roll, kind of like the Sex **Pistols**, you know. 1977 new wave rock 'n' roll was really crude — in fact, the guys were really not very good musicians — but it's got a lot of energy and commitment. That's the way I see it when I look back on it. Some of it was almost embarrassing to me. My very first issue I really liked. That's the other thing — I've found that if I go to do a fill-in, a one-issue fill-in on something, I come up with this one really great idea. It'll be really good. My first issue of DEFENDERS was like my DEFENDERS fill-in, and although I didn't have the skill at the time to do full justice to the idea, it's a story I can look back on and not be embarrassed. It was basically the Defenders as the Justice League. But then I had to do another one and another one — and again there was a lot of commitment and a lot of energy, but it just wasn't very good. It took me about six or eight issues — it was like issues #92 through #100. DEFENDERS #101 was like the first story that *I* really liked. Then from there it was like this constant up and down graph, you know. Whenever I would try to do something that I thought was "mainstream" and would please the fans out there it would always go *pthhht*. Then whenever I just listened to whatever I wanted to do and did it, do weird stories, it was great. I did a story with Devil-Slayer called "Hunger" which was a very powerful story — and it still holds up. I did a story with Son of Satan called "The Double," you know, and it's the same thing. I would get the royalty check ten months later and see that that was the one where it really dipped, but those are the stories that I can look back on, that I really like and can show to a friend without embarrassment.

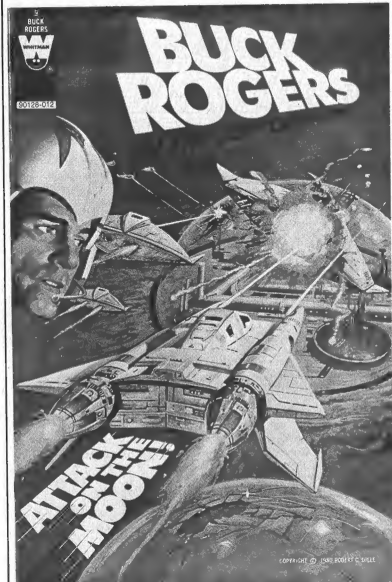
That's a good gauge. None of my friends are really into comics or anything. Even growing up I was into them by myself and everyone else I knew was normal. *(Laughter.)* So if it's a story I feel that I can show to somebody else who's not into comics, without embarrassment, I know it's good. So I know MOONSHADOW's good because I can show it to *anybody*. In fact, I think MOONSHADOW has more appeal to *them* than it does to the average comic fan.



Some of Marvel's best cover art appeared in THE NEW DEFENDERS.

So, yeah, THE DEFENDERS was just this up and down thing, and then it just reached the point where I thought I was burning out. I really needed a change, so I initiated this New Defenders business. But what I realized was that in creating the NEW DEFENDERS I created a book that was exactly the kind of thing that I hated to write. I made it into a standard superhero team, you know; which was real good for the sales — it really boosted the sales — but after six issues of that I said, "I think three years is enough." Happily, **Peter Gillis** came along and made it weird again, and I think he did a better job with it than I ever could have done with it. So, that all worked out. Out of all the books I worked on I have the best feelings — in terms of my own memories and commitment and working with **Don Perlin** — for DEFENDERS. It was a very good experience. Like I said, the work was very uneven; but it was a good experience. Don gets ignored by a lot of people, and Don is extremely good. The nice thing about Don is he really tries and he really improves and he gets better and better. You see the work he's doing now and . . . He's doing

"I always thought I was gon-



DeMatteis does Buck Rogers — interior art by Al McWilliams — circa 1980.

stuff now which sometimes I wish he was doing then. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *I think he's getting more direction working with an artist like Carl Potts.*

MARC: Yeah, Carl helps a lot. Don, in the course of that book, became a friend. I still speak with Don all the time, though we're not working on anything together at the moment. I really have a lot of good feeling about THE DEFENDERS. The nice thing also is that the book never sold tremendously well, but it has these really hardcore fans who responded passionately to all the weird shit that I was doing. I don't think I ever got a good review on an issue of DEFENDERS in any fan press anywhere. Cat **Yronwode** called DEFENDERS #100 the worst comic book of the decade. Luckily, it was only 1980, so it wasn't that bad. *(Laughter.)* But I feel like, looking back, I walked away from DEFENDERS with a lot more good feeling than CONAN or some of the other stuff. What else? What else did I write?

JIM: *CAPTAIN AMERICA.*

MARC: Actually, it started out before I was even here under contract. **Shooter** came to me when they were doing the CAPTAIN AMERICA TV movie and said, "We want to do a tie-in, a TREASURY EDITION tie-in with the CAPTAIN AMERICA TV movie. Come up with a story." So I did this Captain America goes to Hollywood story . . .

MIKE CARLIN: That was the best Captain America story you ever did, the one you felt was the most accurate representation of the character . . .

MARC: Yes, and I had the most emotional commitment then. *(Laughter.)* Actually, at the time it was work, so I had a *lot* of emotional commitment. *(Laughter.)* He actually got to go to Hollywood and meet **Reb Brown**, you know. But luckily, in their wisdom, they cancelled it. I got paid for it, though, so it was okay. And then . . .

JIM: *But I dug it out.*

MARC: Stern and **Byrne** left you up in the air, so we reworked the TREASURY as a three-issue fill-in. Again, when I say I think those stories were wretched . . . I didn't think so at the time. At the time I was, you know, finding my way and doing the best that I could — and obviously, hopefully, people were reading them and liking them. But when I look at them now against what *I* value as a good story, they don't hold up. So, we did that three-parter. That's why I was glad I got to do the Red Skull again, you know. When I did the Red Skull the first time around I don't know who that character was — he wasn't the Red Skull. And then I did another fill-in which was that "American Dreamers" story. That was a good story — which was my little tribute to **Philip K. Dick**. And then **Dave Kraft** kept coming in every third issue and doing two fill-ins. Then I'd come back and do two fill-ins. Somewhere along the line I started doing the book regularly. It took me awhile. I remember I did a two-part DEFENDERS/CAPTAIN AMERICA crossover which made no sense whatsoever. And then . . . something happened . . .

JIM: *Team America.*

MARC: Team America — that was another one we kind of got forced into doing. We previewed Team America in CAPTAIN AMERICA. Actually, the Mad Thinker angle was pretty good . . . Right about when you left the book as editor, Jim, it got good. I don't know what it was.

JIM: *That's how it goes.*

MARC: It had nothing to do with you. It just happened to like, you know, something clicked and I understood *my* Captain America. Whether it was someone else's I don't know, but I came to understand the character. And then **Mike Zeck** and I came to understand each other, too, which helped a lot. If you remember, in the beginning,

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na be a rock 'n' roll star."

I don't think we quite understood each other at all.

JIM: *Well, I think Zeck is — from what everything you've been saying — he's like the opposite. He likes action.*

MARC: Well, again, CAPTAIN AMERICA was one of the books where I guess I was able to do the action. It didn't bother me as much, for some reason. I think I never even thought of Captain America as a superhero. He so transcends the normal superhero that he becomes this something else, this symbol, this bigger-than-life thing. In the course of the books I really got to like *him*, which has to happen if you're going to continue to write a book for that long. I really liked the character, and I got to really like Bernie and the other supporting characters — and then bringing in Nomad...After my first six or so abysmal issues — I'm pretty pleased with the whole run on CAPTAIN AMERICA. I'm real sorry that **Zeck** left when he did — which is not meant as a dig against **Paul Neary**. It's just that the Deathlok issues that we did really reached a peak there, especially the first two parts, and then he went off to do SECRET WARS and **Neary** came on. In terms of the storyline that followed, which was that whole death of the Red Skull storyline, up until the last two parts which were butchered by hands that were not mine...maybe *I* shouldn't say butchered...changed...

MIKE CARLIN: Altered.

MARC: Altered, yeah. I was pretty pleased with the work. Again, I can look back on most of those without embarrassment. In fact, with a little bit of pride.

JIM: *I'm glad to hear that. What else? What have we left out here?*

MARC: GHOST RIDER, which is easily forgotten. I liked the GHOST RIDER stuff, too. Working with **Bob Budiansky** on that. Bob and I really worked well together — it was the first time I ever worked with somebody who was actively co-plotting the book. Overall I think we did consistently good work, you know. I don't have anything profound to say about GHOST RIDER other than I think we did some good work on it.

JIM: *Well, then you did lots' — it seemed like a lot — of limited series.*

MARC: ICEMAN, SUB-MARINER and GARGOYLE — in ascending order of quality.

JIM: *Didn't like ICEMAN, huh?*

MARC: It was just a mistake. It was my idea, so there was no one to blame but myself. I'll just say that it was a mistake and if the series made any sense whatsoever it was due to **Bob Budiansky**. That was a case where the editor's input was really needed — and Bob was a big help. It still failed, of course. *(Laughter.)* And, of course, it was the biggest selling thing I've ever done.

JIM: *Why do you think that is?*

MARC: DEFENDERS. You know, anything with DEFENDERS in it goes through the roof.

JIM: *Right.*

MARC: No, it was mutants, of course. Mutants, mutants, and more mutants.

JIM: *What about SUB-MARINER?*

MARC: That reunited the GHOST RIDER team...me and Bob and **Tom De Falco**. It was a good piece of work. Nothing to go down in history or anything, but it was good. Nothing to be embarrassed about. And I especially like the second one...the one where we got into Namor's repressed feelings about his days as a Bowery bum. Y'know, here's this Prince...one of the most arrogant fuckers on the planet — and he spent *years* as a Bowery bum. What does that do to a man? I think that angle really worked. And that's all I have to say about that one.

JIM: *GARGOYLE?*

MARC: GARGOYLE — out of all the things I've done for the Marvel line...as opposed to Epic and graphic novels and those things...GARGOYLE was far and away the best. It really worked.

JIM: *Why? Why GARGOYLE and not ICEMAN?*

MARC: Well, for one thing, he's *mine*. I created him. He comes out of me\...shares many of my concerns and neuroses and —

JIM: *You hang around churches a lot?*

MARC: Yeah. But...it just worked from

HELLCAT'S CHEEKS PALE, HER SHOULDERS SAG, AS IF THE GREEN GOLIATH'S WORDS HAVE SOMEHOW DEFLATED HER. THE MONSTER LOOSENS HIS GRIP, AND...
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, GRENNIE. I DID.
AND I'M SORRY.

The Hulk and Hellcat have a tiff in THE DEFENDERS #101.

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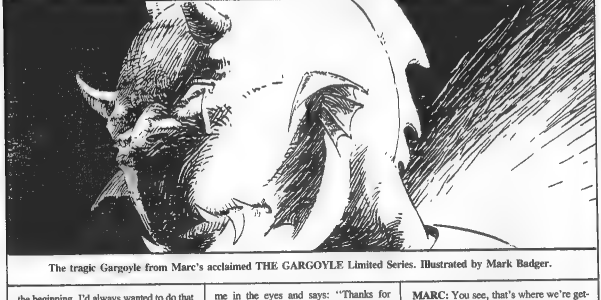
J. MARC DeMATTEIS

"MARVEL TEAM-UP was a pretty shitty comic."



The tragic Gargoyle from Marc's acclaimed THE GARGOYLE Limited Series. Illustrated by Mark Badger.

the beginning. I'd always wanted to do that character the right way. We'd had him in DEFENDERS for years and **Don Perlin** and I were... We came to like him so much, as a *person*... this was a classic case of the character coming alive for us. We came to like Isaac Christians, this little old man inside the Gargoyle's body, so much that it began to mellow out the way we portrayed the outer shell, the gargoyle aspect. And, before you know it, he's this cute little funny animal. Which he was never intended to be.

JIM: *So you wanted to get back on course?*

MARC: Yeah. I wanted to do a classic dark fantasy. Let's face it, the only other dark fantasy or horror or whatever that's out there now is SWAMP THING — and if you're gonna do that kind of book — although I think GARGOYLE was vastly different from SWAMP THING, vastly different — you'd better do good work. 'Cause comparisons are inevitable. Anyway, **Carl Potts** was the editor, and we've always had a good working relationship, he's really dedicated to quality control, y'know. He wants all his books to be the best. He really does. And Carl found **Mark Badger**...

JIM: *Where did he find him?*

MARC: Begging on the street, I think. *(Laughter.)* I don't know — a convention or something. And Mark was just perfect. Perfect. And the story just flowed out of me — the way all good stories should — and it just clicked. It just worked. And, happily, it sold pretty well, considering that this was a character that most people didn't even *know* about. And the response has been... I was at this convention down in Texas and this guy walks up to me, shakes my hand with this bone-crushing grip, looks me in the eyes and says: "Thanks for Isaac." That's been the feeling I've been getting from talking to people. They were really touched by this thing. 'Cause, as I said before, it wasn't really horror. It was a psychological fantasy. A character study. A spiritual quest.

(ENTER JOE RUBINSTEIN)

JOE RUBINSTEIN: I think MOONSHADOW is brilliant.

MARC: Thank you. I appreciate that.

JOE: It really is swell stuff.

MARC: You see, that's where we're getting. I had to go through all that bad material so I could finally do this one series.

JOE: Don't tell me what's coming.

MARC: I won't tell you a thing. Sometimes, honestly, *I* don't even know. It surprises me as well.

JIM: *Well, when you were writing all this stuff were you thinking, "What I'd really like to be doing is..."*

MARC: Well, who was I talking to today? Somebody came up to me — **Peter Gillis** — and he was saying, "I can see now in MOONSHADOW all those things you were trying to do before in all this other stuff, but they wouldn't quite fit" into the square or whatever. I don't know whether I was thinking "I have to do MOONSHADOW" or anything like that. I guess it was always a question of finding the right vehicle for my own particular talents, you know — which obviously those books weren't. I mean, I was really doing the best that I could, and hopefully some of it was good — I know some of it is good — but I think for the type of stuff that I do well I really needed to step outside the square.

When I did the original Greenberg the Vampire story in BIZARRE ADVENTURES, I got this incredible response to that story — mostly in the office. I don't think anyone out there noticed the story, but it's more important sometimes to get the response from the people in the office. And I said, "Gee, what is it with this story?" Well (A) it's not superheroes, (B) it really came out of *me*. In spite of the fact that it was a vampire story, these are real people. A bunch of neurotic Jews from Brooklyn — people I know very well. And it had humor in it. Some of my DEFENDERS were just so *deadly* serious

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"I know when I suck and I know when I'm good."

© 1986 by J. M. DeMatteis and Jon J Muth

and full of breast-beating and all of that — and I think one of my strengths as a writer is the humor, but I never managed to inject that so much into the stories, you know. And Greenberg had a lot of that. It dawned on me that I was putting the same amount of work into both things and yet one worked and one didn't. It's because of the direction and the type of story that it is. So that kind of woke me up.

JIM: *What led to MOONSHADOW then?*

MARC: I've had that idea for ten years at least; and like I mentioned, one of the first samples at **Shooter's** office — in 1979 or whatever — was this think called STARDUST which was a very kind of early and vague version of MOONSHADOW. I didn't do it then, thank God, because it really needed time to develop and grow in my head. I had it floating around and it just gestated in the back of my head and evolved and grew. And then the last time my contract was up. . . I know what was happening. I was there slogging away on DEFENDERS and all of this stuff, you know. The past few years things have been getting very exciting — new formats and allegedly new ideas. People were trying new things and DC was doing CAMELOT 3000. RONIN, I think. Epic Comics were starting up. I looked at that stuff and said, "These are nice looking books done in a nice classy way, and here I am slogging away on DEFENDERS, writing my four books a month and going crazy doing all of that stuff." And I said, you know, "I know I'm a good writer." I guess that's what it came down to, that I really did have to find the vehicle that would allow me to express my voice and express my strengths the way that they should be expressed. And I was talking to **Karen Berger**, who is a good friend of mine from way back before — we knew each other when we were both real people, before we became comic-book people. Now all we talk about is comic books. We used to talk about other things. *(Laughter.)*

MIKE CARLIN: Oh, like the kind of things that go in MOONSHADOW huh?

MARC: Yeah, *pornography* and all that stuff. *(Laughter.)* Anyway . . .

JIM: *Well, what's your reaction to that?*

MARC: We'll get to that. Let me just finish this. I was pondering going over to DC at that point — and I had the MOONSHADOW idea and I bounced it off Karen and she just *loved* it. She wanted me to do it at DC. That was nice to get that response. When I originally envisioned the character — I hate to say it — he even had powers. *(Laughter.)* He has no powers now, thank God; he's just human. Anyway, I started to play with that idea again, the whole concept of MOONSHADOW; and basically the thing was, at that point I was happy at Marvel. I had no great need to go to DC. I just felt like I needed a change. My feeling was, creatively, it's time to shit or get off the pot.

Marc's most ambitious project yet, the 12-issue fairy tale for adults, MOONSHADOW. Illustrated by Jon J Muth.

It was time for me to renew my Marvel contract: this was 1983, I think. So, I spoke to **Shooter** and I said, "Look, this is what I want to do." And Jim, to his credit, said, "Okay, we'll do it." He passed it on to **Goodwin** and it went from there. That's how I got the GREENBERG THE VAMPIRE graphic novel also. Jim had rejected that a few months before saying, "It won't sell enough to do it." He *liked* it, but he didn't think we should do it. But then when it's contract time you can get away with more things. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Well, that's the. . .*

MARC: Well, it's not a bad thing. It's understandable. Jim said, "Okay. You've been here long enough. You've paid your dues. You deserve to get a chance to do some things that you want to do." And I respect him for letting me do it. Let's face it: I wasn't one of Marvel's top-selling writers. Jim could easily have said: "Fine. Go do it for DC."

JIM: *What's the background on the*

"Marvel's President, Jim Galton, read the

GREENBERG graphic novel, about the story itself, for someone reading this that's never seen the initial appearance?

MARC: He's kind of a combination of **Woody Allen, J. D. Salinger** and **Stephen King**. He's a best-selling horror novelist on the order of **Stephen King**, and he's a recluse on the order of **J. D. Salinger**, and he's a neurotic New York Jew on the order of **Woody Allen**. It's horror, but it's, again, it's much more. I'm a big **Steve Gerber** fan, and that's what I liked about HOWARD THE DUCK. In a sense, once you bought the fact that it was a duck, then he was a pretty realistic, three-dimensional human being — and you got away with everything. You could have a whole story where nothing else happened other than real human stuff, because the guy was a duck and that was the fantasy hook. Greenberg has the same kind of thing. Like, okay, we have the basic vampire thing and that's good to play with. I love stories about damnation and redemption, and it's a great symbol for the fact that we're all, in one way or another, damned souls seeking some ultimate redemption. If you look at almost all my good stories, you can almost chart them: "He starts over here and he goes all the way down and he gets really fucked up and then he kind of slowly crawls up through the mud and finds his way to redemption." The same thing is running through MOONSHADOW. So Greenberg was a lot of that, and what we're getting into with the graphic novel — which is really fun also — is we're milking the Jewish aspect. We're milking it. We're getting into Jewish mysticism and things like that. You've got these realistic — what I think are realistic — characters, and it's fun sitting down and writing, you know, real people's dialogue... they don't have to talk in a way that reminds you what happened for six issues, they don't say "'man o' mine'" or "By the Crimson Band of Cytorrak" or...

JIM: *Well, you're starting from scratch.*

MARC: Yeah, exactly. We can take it all the way back to **Lee** and **Kirby** again. What were they doing? In a sense, they were doing what Epic and the alternates are doing now. "Let's create our own universe. Let's make it up and do it our way." And that's why that material had such incredible energy and it was so good. That's why I think now — I mean the money is still obviously being made on the good old mainstream stuff — but I think the — "THE FUTURE OF COMICS HAS GOT TO BE IN STEPPING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE AND STARTING NEW THINGS AND SPINNING OFF INTO NEW UNIVERSES." *Personal* universes. I think that's the key.

All the best work — and I'm not just talking about comics here, although I'll keep the examples of it in comics — comes out of someone with something to say, something unique to him or her... some inner drive or demon. **Kirby** obviously has been driven. Stan... it's fashionable to knock Stan, but Stan had something to say that only he could have said... he was Stan, he was unique. He was, I think, a genius at creating good children's literature... stuff that could be equally enjoyed by adults — which is something else I'd like to get into here... But, anyway — if you look at current examples... **Frank Miller** is clearly driven by unique personal demons. Frank's recent DAREDEVIL work... that's the only comic book — aside from reprints — the

IN FACT, I'VE HAD 'EM FOR NINE YEARS NOW...
MAN, WHAT A SCENARIO!
BRIGHT-EYED YOUNG WRITER GOES OFF TO RESEARCH HIS FIRST NOVEL..
...SAID WRITER MEETS A GORGEOUS RED-HEAD AT SATANIST CULT MEETING AND FALLS HEAD OVER HEELS...
...HE TAKES HER HOME, SHE TAKES A CHOMP OUT OF HIS NECK THE SIZE OF NEW JERSEY— AND THE REST IS HISTO—
BANG
eh?
© 1981 by MCG

Oscar Greenberg's capsuled version of his undead origin, from his first story, which appeared in BIZARRE ADVENTURES #29. Illustrated by Steve Leialoha.

GREENBERG graphic novel...and loved it."

© 1986 by MCG

A heretofore unpublished color sketch by Mark Badger for the GREENBERG Graphic Novel.

only book that I read regularly. He's become, I think, even better as a writer than he is as an artist. He has a point of view. He has something to say... something of worth:...and he says it eloquently. The same for **Alan Moore**. What I, as a creator, appreciate about Alan's SWAMP THING is that he didn't come in and feel that he had to pay homage to anything that came before. He immediately absorbed that book and made it his... uniquely his. **Gerber**'s another good example. The stuff that **Gerber** did in the Seventies at Marvel...some of it doesn't hold up that well...some of it doesn't even make sense! But some of it is still amazing work. And, even if *none* of it made sense... He went out on a limb. He took risks. He followed the inner demons and angels and didn't kiss ass. Better **Steve Gerber** experimenting and failing than a thousand "successful" **Stan Lee** clones.

I was talking to **Keith Giffen** recently... we'll be doing a DOCTOR FATE book for DC — we're back to the realm of pyschological fantasy again — anyway... He's been getting flak from a lot of people about the fact that his style has changed so drastically. He's driven. He's trying new things. I saw his HELL ON EARTH graphic novel and, frankly, I think a lot of it didn't work. It was claustrophobic, it was confusing. But the point is, a lot of it *did* work. A lot of it was really quite good. And it didn't look like all the other shit out there. It didn't look like your typical $5.95 comic book masquerading as a graphic novel — and, regardless of whether I may like parts of it or not, I have to respect that. Because, next time out, he's gonna work out some more of the kinks and it's just gonna bet better and better. While **Artist X** will still be doing the same old shit the same old way — competently, even *more* than competently — but there's no growth there, there's no challenge. There's no vision. So anyway, that's where I think the future lies...things like MOONSHADOW — I forget the name of the guy who writes that — things that are totally unconnected to those mainstream universes. And, also,

THAT'S IT! IGNORE YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD AND LISTEN TO THE LADY THAT TURNED YOU INTO AN UNDEAD FREAK! MOST GUYS WOULD'VE PUT A STAKE THROUGH HER HEART-- BUT YOU FELL IN LOVE WITH HER!
MORRIE--

© 1981 by MCG

"It's not like there's a big panel of Moon-

Considering the influences, is it any wonder my work-when was, first of the "real-time" Romantic? I can think of at least a dozen, exalted beings, Anne or letters, who have been consumed by society. Byelines were the door to salvation, maybe? The darkness to hell, suffering the agents partner. I, born into quite a English sufferer, the deeper the depression, the more I'd strive neroticistically about the Zoo kind of aspect: fashion, swamp and shadows like some shamanistic, mid-Carolyn Kaye
Above all else, I was a Dreamer of the First Class — and my most cherished dream was of BECOMING. How I longed to quit the walls of my prison and run the cosmic racetrack a good, strong one! Dangers would be faced, heroic exploits achieved, and laurels received. Never the solitary creature, she occupied my fantasies, inevitably forged of the Dreamers' theme, notably "Whatever way it goes from here, I am waiting for Her!" I would modestly whisper: "The Most Many who will one day deserve and rule at my richness by with a heartfelt love far beyond the fleshly pleasures you offer."
"This Dante-like belief in a pure and perfect Beatrice didn't prevent me from shooting at least half of my many dates a knocking, even often bedding in some really strange of the crazy cuckoos I managed to lure into "Lost Rambles" at one point, I was the "in my section of town" for "Dream-like Sex Ideas" (and other assorted "Dear Abby" topics). Anyway, I'm sure you get the picture.

The infamous masturbation "scene" from MOONSHADOW #1.

© 1986 by J. M. DeMatteis and Jon J Muth

shadow with his schlong in his hand."

© 1986 by J. M. DeMatteis and Jon J Muth

shooting for that allegedly adult market that everyone says were're shooting for; but everyone's really afraid to shoot for it because if you say the wrong word people are going to get upset. At least, that's what we found in the beginning with MOONSHADOW. Things have improved considerable since then.

JIM: *That brings up people accusing you of writing pornography.*

MARC: Right.

MIKE CARLIN: Who did such a thing?

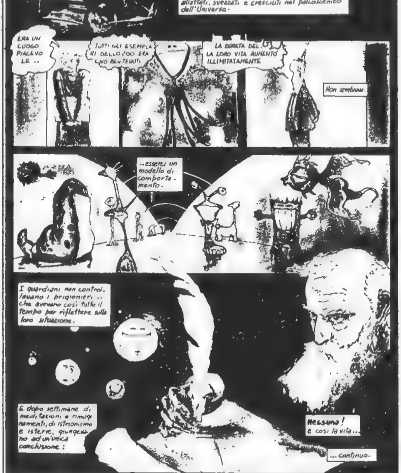
MARC: I received a letter from some comics shop out in Nebraska or something that called us pornographers. "We don't need more shit like this" or something. "We hope your father appreciated your artistic endeavor." I dedicated the book to my father, who passed away before it came out, by the way . . . I dedicated the book to his memory. Do you really think I would have dedicated a work of pornography to my father's memory?

JIM: *Well, it seems like there are separate issues there. Aside from the story, they seem to be more upset that It didn't have a warning symbol or something.*

MARC: Well, it's funny — again, I wonder. I did this little p.r. thing that you ran in MARVEL AGE and I specifically said that this is for, y'know, grown-up people and that it might *offend* some people of tender sensibilities. Anyway, the funny thing was . . . the joy for me on MOONSHADOW is I sit down to write it and my mind-set changes completely. I don't feel like I'm writing comic books. I feel like *I am writing*, you know. I sat down with the first issue and I just wrote it the way that I wanted to write it — and yes, there was a *(gasp)* masturbation scene. It's not even a masturbation scene. It's not like there's a big panel of Moonshadow with his schlong in his hand, you know. It was meant and it was done in a humorous fashion — and any reasonably intelligent adult I know — including my sweet Jewish mother and all of my conservative Italian relatives — who read it wasn't offended. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Well, I read it and just enjoyed it — thought it was very good. It wasn't until later when people were pointing it out . . .*

MARC: Yeah. I was totally surprised, as was everyone in the office. It went through everybody like that, because it all worked in context. To me the big problem is this splitting of hairs. We want to do adult comics — and adult doesn't mean X-rated comics, it just means approaching a piece of work in a comic book the way somebody would if you were approaching it in a novel, you know, for another grown-up to read — and they want to do it, but at the same time they don't know how to market it the proper way . . .


In base a tali, fantasmi passaporti, e stato concepito lo ZOOT - destinazione di tutti i cuccioli infelici che erano stati abbattuti, sprezzati e crocifissi nel balbaccamento dell'Universo.
ERA UN LUOGHO PIACEVOLE . . .
TUTTI GLI ESEMPLARI DI DALLO ZOO ERA NEL BUSINESS.
LA BIBBIA DEL LA LORO VITA AVVENTO ILLIMITATAMENTE.
Non sembrano
. . . ESISTE UN MODELLO DI COMPORTA - MENTO . . .
E QUANDO NON CONTROL . . . MANDA I PROPRIETARI . . . CHE SOMMANO COSI' TUTTI I FIGARDI PER RIFLETTERE SULLA LORO SITUAZIONE.
E OGGI SOFFERMARE DI MODI SESSUALI E MOLTI MENTALI, DI ATTEGGIAMENTI E ISTERIE, QUANDO NON ADDIRITTURA CONFUSIONE !
Nessuno ! E così la vita . . .
. . . continua

MOONSHADOW in Italian. Already a foreign hit.

JIM: *Well, that's interesting what you just said because of the argument about censorship. They keep pointing to movies and the motion picture code and HBO, which in their program guides will say "contains some violence" or "partial nudity" — whatever that is. My favorite word they us is "mild violence." I don't ever want to encounter "mild violence." (Laughter.)*

MARC: The guy, he stabs you with no conviction at all. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *But when you mention novels — unless it's like really porno stuff — there really isn't a rating system.*

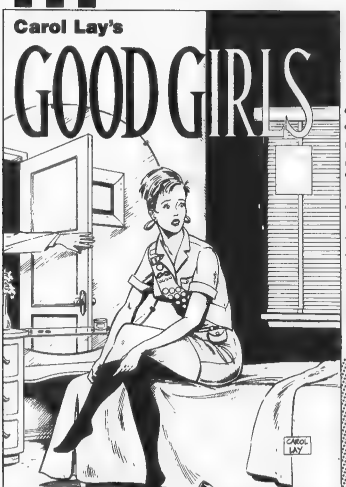
MARC: No. Well, the other thing is, and this is more a sad commentary on America, not that many people really read anymore. It's like 10% of the population reads 90% of the books or whatever the exact figure is. There is a really high illiteracy rate out there. And don't forget, they're burning HUCKLEBERRY FINN and they're burning **Kurt Vonnegut**. Right in the same areas where they don't want to carry MOONSHADOW they're burning literature. And they are banning. I don't know. I think that maybe books are just a little safer because not that many people read them. I don't know what it is. Really, I think illiteracy is a big problem in this country. And one of the great things about comics is they actually hook people on reading, people who wouldn't read otherwise . .

JIM: *I guess until the books wind up in school libraries the groups don't read 'em.*

MARC: It's the same kind of problem that we ran into with MOONSHADOW. It's like some person gets ahold of SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE or whatever

Carol Lay's

GOOD GIRLS



"It had something to do with her hair..."
She's got the job
(love-lorn columnist for
a great metropolitan newspaper).
She's got the friends
(Ultra-Ma, Stupendo Boy).
She's got the costume
(covered with hearts, no less).
But she just can't fly!
She's Monica Saunders.
Ms. Lonelyhearts.
Oh, yeah.
She's got the hair,
too.

Find out why they're good.

ON SALE IN NOVEMBER

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

© 1986 Carol Lay

"The President of France reads comics."

© 1984 by MCG

it is and reads some paragraph that offends him, you know — and because of that one line or that one word they decide that this is not "acceptable." Whereas if they read the damn thing and if they could just see that it has a context beyond their hang-ups... It cracks me up. We had some problems with THE GARGOYLE, because it dealt with pagan religion and Christian religions and how they intersect and all that — and I heard that somebody had sent back a copy of the second issue of that book to Shooter saying they were offended by it, offended as a Christian. Whereas if you read the story — and if you read most of my stories, the good ones — they basically deal with spiritual matters. They are very spiritual stories. And I don't mean that in any pretentious way, but they are. Those're the things that concern me. Those are the things that I write about. MOONSHADOW is this journey to awakening; and it's the old can't-see-the-forest-for-the-trees kind of thing.

JIM: *Well, I guess the objection is...*

MARC: I understand. I understand that if someone ... I said, in fact, in that little thing I did in MARVEL AGE, "No one below the puberty level should be allowed to read this comic." But, you know, you can't be much clearer than that, and that was in the press releases as well. I remember seeing that.

JIM: *Well, yeah, I don't think they are denying that. In fact, what they are saying is there should be some label on the book itself. In other words, they're not saying, "Don't do adult comics." They are saying, "If you are, you should say so."*

MARC: But then, of course, the same guy who wouldn't carry MOONSHADOW for

What next for Gargoyle?

the reason that it offended him in the first place now won't carry it because it says *for mature readers* on the cover, or *a fairy tale for grown ups*, or whatever it is, and he doesn't want to carry that kind of material.

JIM: *But how many of them are carrying the undergrounds which have that label on them?*

MARC: But, you know, it's not like... I mean, it offends *me* in a sense 'cause if you read the book, if there's anything that you walk away with — especially from the first issue, before we really start getting this kid in trouble — is this sense of wonder and whimsy and warmth. The three Ws. *(Laughter.)* And it's hardly offensive or pornographic or... I can't see it.

JIM: *It's not exploitive.*

MARC: No. It's not exploitive. I think that's the word. It's not exploitive in the least. You know, with the allegedly-offensive stuff that's there, it's just there because *it's part of the story!* There's nothing exploitive about it. Believe me, no one's gonna want to jerk off to an issue of MOONSHADOW!

JIM: *The first issue was written in such a style that sometimes as nice as the pictures were they were almost superfluous on occasion. Did you think that?*

MARC: We're trying for something different with this. We do do sequential comics, but a lot of it isn't sequential comics. **JAY MUTH** and I work in a pretty neat way anyway — and it's kind of a line between the kind of PRINCE VALIANT type of thing, illustrated fiction, and traditional comics.

Next issue, Marc tells what it's like to again write Spider-Man. Also, is he happy having MOONSHADOW labelled "For Mature Readers Only"? What was writer Kurt Vonnegut's reaction when Marc asked for a publishable quote about MOONSHADOW? These are only a few of the many questions answered in the incredible conclusion of the ultimate J. Marc DeMatteis interview.

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...BUT IT IS MORE THE PAIN OF HUMILIATION THAT SETS THE SON OF SATAN'S HEART AFIRE...
...UNLEASHING THE DEMONIC BERSERKOUL HE STRIVES CONTINUALLY TO KEEP IN CHECK
AND IS IT ONLY FEAR OF THE DAMAGE HE MIGHT DO HIS FELLOW DEFENDER THAT FINALLY DRIVES DAIMON HELLSTROM'S SECOND-SELF DOWN?
FEAR...OR PERHAPS SOMETHING ELSE?
JUST AS I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT, DAIMON! YOU'RE ALL BARK AND NO BITE!
SATAN'S LITTLE BOY IS A WIMP!

Hellcat unsheathes her provocative claws in THE DEFENDERS #98.

"All of us here would have loved to have

DAVE DARRIGO & DAVE ROSS

In September 1985, I was brought to Toronto to work with writer/director and former S.C.T.V. performer, Dave Thomas, to storyboard his film SECRET WEAPON. The film company put me up in a rather nice apartment with all needs taken care of, including a short walk to the corner comicbook store...Dragon Lady Comic Shop at 200 Queen Street West, Toronto, where I met a gentleman who created and wrote, for Renegade Press, THE WORD-SMITH. Dave Darrigo's a quiet bloke who believes in comics as art and entertainment. Marvel or DC should grab this guy quick! He is like a shot of B-15 before the Friday night fights...quick, sure and intelligent. One night in beautiful Toronto, I invited Dave Darrigo to bring a couple of cartoonists for a sushi dinner. He brought Ron Hobbs, local commercial artist, and a bloke I didn't expect to see — good old Dave Ross, who had just finished pencils on his first issue of ALPHA FLIGHT for Marvel's Carl Potts. I'd met Dave through Bill Wray in 1982. Dave is one hell of a storyteller! This is the "two Daves and a Hobbs!" or "Canada Rocks" interview...good fun was had by all!

PAUL POWER: *Dave, you just returned from New York...*

DAVE ROSS: The Big Apple, as it were. A nice little trip to Marvel to meet with my editor **Carl Potts** for the first time, and with **Bill Mantlo**, the writer of ALPHA FLIGHT. It's always interesting to meet people who have just been voices over the phone.

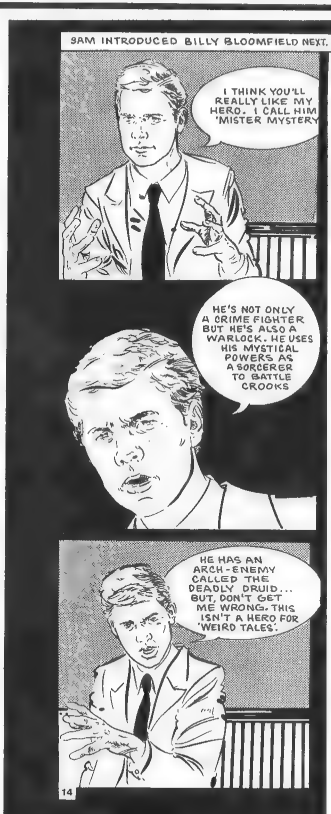
PAUL: *What was your first face-to-face meeting with Carl like?*

ROSS: It was in his office — I was looking around for an eight-year-old kid. I really wanted to send one up with my portfolio and have him say, "**Dave Ross** is here." (*Laughter.*) But I guess it was the wrong time of day, I couldn't find one in the vicinity. Carl's a great guy — he had a whole pile of stuff that he wanted to show me — a ream of Xeroxes of Japanese cartoon material — not animation, cartooning. Beautiful stuff where the artist really had a mastery of negative space, and a sense of design and setting the elements up. We went through that together, and some other Xeroxed material that he thought I'd enjoy or would be inspirational. We got into

been in the shoes of Lee and Kirby."

Artist Dave Ross, wordsmith Dave Darrigo & illustrator Ron Hobbs.

"I don't think that after WORDSMITH


SAM INTRODUCED BILLY BLOOMFIELD NEXT.
I THINK YOU'LL REALLY LIKE MY HERO. I CALL HIM 'MISTER MYSTERY
HE'S NOT ONLY A CRIME FIGHTER BUT HE'S ALSO A WARLOCK. HE USES HIS MYSTICAL POWERS AS A SORCERER TO BATTLE CROOKS
HE HAS AN ARCH-ENEMY CALLED THE DEADLY DRUID... BUT, DON'T GET ME WRONG. THIS ISN'T A HERO FOR 'WEIRD TALES'.
14

that right away. It's nice to work for an editor who is also an artist. A person who understands the situations that I'm liable to get into — I can't fuck around with him, I can't make lame excuses that he's going to be able to see right through. But by the same token, he understands the other points, too.

PAUL: *What are some other things you've done?*

ROSS: The first thing I did for DC was **BLUE BEETLE** — four pages of it, with a script by **Steve Englehart**, and I don't know if it will ever see print because I won't be doing the regular book now. What they are planning to do is to try to put together a weekly book and have short bits every week with a number of the Charlton characters, so they would be dealing with Blue Beetle, and Peacemaker, etcetera in this one book. So that was the first thing I did for them and **Alex Nino** inked it. After that, I did the **BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS ANNUAL** for '85 and then I did the **STAR TREK ANNUAL** for '85, which I spent a lot of time on trying to get the likenesses to work and you want to get them not only in the large panels, but in the small panels, and even the background characters — you want them to look like the characters. It's a little extra work because you've got all the other considerations.

PAUL: *You and Dave Darrigo, here, have worked on a couple of projects together — how did you meet?*

ROSS: Through mutual friends, and then Dave was working down at the Dragon Lady — I got to know him there and talk to him a lot. We also live in the same area.

DAVE DARRIGO: But it was through mutual friends.

PAUL: *How many years do you go back?*

ROSS: About five or six.

PAUL: *Do you see yourselves working together in the near future?*

DARRIGO: That's a good question, Paul, but I don't think so, no. I don't think that after WORDSMITH a lot of people in this industry will come knocking at my door — I don't think they would assume that I could do the type of work that the business is made for.

PAUL: *Why would you say that? It's good writing.*

DARRIGO: I'm open to doing material that is more mainstream and such — the type of work that Dave does.

PAUL: *Have you submitted anything to the companies regarding their heroes?*

DARRIGO: No, I sat back — I could have

people will come knocking at my door."

done that in the time that elapsed between the acceptance of WORDSMITH and its publication. But I decided to sit back and let the book open any doors for me, and that's why I say that maybe that's a mistake — because now that it has come out people will say that I'm not suitable to work on any regular material.

PAUL: *I wonder about that. What do you think about it?*

ROSS: Well, I wouldn't jump to that conclusion, Dave, and even if you get a reputation for doing the kind of work that we've seen in WORDSMITH, there's nothing wrong with that.

PAUL: *I think it's good writing, and good writing has to be recognized. I think the opportunities in WORDSMITH are quite nice. Dave Darrigo, for those of you that don't know about this book, works at Dragon Lady Comics, and his boss is a publisher, as well.*

DARRIGO: His name is **John Biernat,** and he's the publisher of Dragon Lady Press, which reprints old newspaper strips from the Thirties right through to the Sixties.

PAUL: *Primarily adventure strips, right? For the readers who don't know about your own work — WORDSMITH — give us some background and how it came about with publisher Deni Loubert of Renegade.*

DARRIGO: Well, originally the idea was conceived to be a novel. I was always a pulp magazine fan and one day I was reading about how well some of the writers were paid in the Thirties — and they would do quite a lot of work in the course of a year — a lot of words, and of course they were paid by the word, and the more they would write, the more they were paid. I just thought of how well these guys were doing writing these incredibly silly stories — really flights of fantasy, and with people starving out on the streets of New York where most of them were based, and I thought that was such a contrast — if I was a writer back then, walking along the street, seeing people in bread lines and soup lines and such and here I would be writing these stories to entertain the masses, and here are the masses starving and doing anything to get some money. So I thought it would make a good novel, and eventually I thought it could be worked into a comic. So I approached **Deni Loubert** at a convention — Maplecon in Ottawa — that's kind of the national convention up here every year for comics and science fiction, and she liked the idea a lot. I didn't have **Rick Taylor,** who is involved with it now, on it at that time. She wanted to do the idea

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STORY: BUZZ DIXON ART: PETER HSU

"Aurora is definitely a fun lady to draw."

from a concept outline I gave her. Eventually, she saw Rick's work, and she liked it a lot, and we both agreed that his work would be the most suitable for the series, and we worked it out from there.

PAUL: *Any characters at Marvel that you would like to have a go at?*

DARRIGO: I'd like to do something with one of their villains — Kraven the Hunter. I like the character, and I think they could do a lot with him. I'd also like to try a JOURNEY story — Wolverine McAListaire — the **Bill Loebs** book, that's my favorite comic and I'd like to try a story in that. I've always been a fan of the Charlton characters that DC has picked up. I think there is a lot you can do with Thunderbolt and Peacemaker. Dave can tell you about Blue Beetle.

ROSS: I was slated to do BLUE BEETLE until the ALPHA FLIGHT offer came along and I took that.

PAUL: *Dave . . .Ross — what would you like to do with ALPHA FLIGHT? Where is it going?*

ROSS: One of the things I would like to see is a trend away from the self absorption that the book has gone through. The storylines up to this point in time have always directly related to the characters in the group — characters having problems. If you look through the stories from the beginning, it's been a matter of . . .

PAUL: *It's a family book — a family crisis book.*

ROSS: They never get to see outside themselves. They never get the chance because all the stories are always dealing directly with one or more of the characters and their problems.

PAUL: *Kind of hit me like an X-MEN book, in a sense.*

ROSS: All the little problems. I don't mind that, it's been a tried and true formula ever since **Stan Lee** got going on using problems to create a sense of humanity about the characters.

PAUL: *Yes, but you solve the problem and you move on. I think that a person with powers would find a good side to life, instead of being constantly in this crisis.*

ROSS: I think it's important from a storytelling point of view for the books that they have a good balance of — yes, some human interest, but let's get the characters outside themselves. Let's see them called in on things that they have no direct relation to, but because it's a particular problem or situation going on that could use their particular talents.

PAUL: *Which characters do you like? Is there any you found prior to drawing it that you liked, and now that you're drawing the book are there any?*

ROSS: Obviously, John had a great deal of fun drawing Aurora, and she is definitely a fun lady to draw. I enjoy Puck — he's a lot of fun to draw and he needs to be . .

PAUL: *I think he's the star of the book.*

ROSS: He's got a lot of character, and it shows in little ways, and in big ways in terms of what Puck is about and the stories that have revolved around him. Also in terms of every time you see him, **John Byrne** did a very nice job of drawing him

Prince Namor, pencilled by Dave Ross, inked by Wilce Portacio. From ALPHA FLIGHT.

— the little things — stance, expressions and so on. He really is a very interesting character.

PAUL: *What I find interesting about you doing the book is that John Byrne — a Canadian — was doing a book about Canadian characters, and now we have another Canadian doing the book. Did that just happen, or did they grab you because you live up here and are familiar with the settings?*

ROSS: No, I don't think that had anything to do with it. I think it was a matter of timing. When **Carl Potts** called and wanted me to send work — it was just a matter of them wanting samples. It was only a few weeks after that that a specific need for an artist for ALPHA FLIGHT became apparent. It was at that time that Carl showed my work to **Bill Mantlo** and then Bill got

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"They sent Claremont to Paris!"

back to Carl with a recommendation. I don't think the Canadian aspect was a big concern to them at all.

PAUL: *Your artwork is very good, but I would have thought that would have played into it. You're here, you know the settings — it's like trying to get me to draw New York — I'm from Australia, I don't live in New York, so it's like an artificial look.*

ROSS: I keep asking them to do a story set in Toronto, but so far nothing has materialized. I keep telling them, "Hey, if you do a story about Toronto, I know the city inside and out. I can get Polaroids of everything and make it look really authentic." Of course, the only people who would really appreciate it are the people who live here — who realize how close this would be to real life. The important thing in any of the stories is to make sure that it's commercially viable and entertaining to a general audience. One could possibly get too involved in that detail aspect to the detriment of the whole.

PAUL: *I find it sad sometimes when you may see an artist who has done all this work, and then he's up against the wall on a deadline, and purely because it is a business and they have to get the book done, it goes to an inker who butchers it — but from a professional point of view, they have to hit that deadline, and all this work you've done is for nothing. They put Vince Colletta or someone like that on it, who is good at whipping a book out overnight — saves them a lot of money, and you've done all this work — seems like a shame.*

ROSS: Of course, any artist who puts in a lot of work, particularly in the degree of detail, wants to see an accurate rendering of the work inked in accordance to the style they've laid down and I think it's of the best interest of the company to match people with similar styles and similar looks to their work. In fact, it's kind of funny you mentioned the Canadian thing because they sent me a humongous box of reference stuff on Canada. *(Laughter.)* **Dave Darrigo** over here got a real chuckle out of that when he heard about it. This crazy idea — here I am up in Canada, and an American company, based in New York is sending me a boxful of reference on Canada.

PAUL: *One nice thing — they've done it for you and you don't have to pay for it. Dave Darrigo, would you like to have a crack at an offshoot story of ALPHA FLIGHT for you guys to work on together?*

DARRIGO: Yeah. I can understand why you like Puck, Paul. For those of you who don't know what Paul looks like, he's very short and muscular and I can see why he likes Puck. *(Laughter.)* Actually, I like Puck myself. I see a lot of potential there, I can see him in a "mean streets" type of thing the way **Byrne** had him in one story. At least that's the way he always projected him — I think he had him in a bar once.

PAUL: *He was a bouncer in a bar.*

DARRIGO: I could do a lot with that — I'd like to do that.

ROSS: That was in the first issue, right? That's the only one I haven't seen.

PAUL: *David, will you be giving any input on the Alpha Flight plots?*

ROSS: Mostly details about their environment. But, they have a base set up on a hypothetical island just off the western coast of British Columbia and that's an environment I've never been out to see. I've never been to the west coast of Canada — I've been to the east coast and Quebec, but I've never traveled west. I've never been west of southwest Ontario. That's a whole area I've never seen and don't have any expertise about. Now if somebody wants to foot the bill, I'll be glad to go.

DARRIGO: They sent **Claremont** and his friends to Paris, they could send you to British Columbia.

PAUL: *Wasn't that a publicity thing, too? They did other things in Paris, too — they were like company representatives. I think it's a clever thing — it should be done more often.*

Ross' Shanna tryout sketch for Marvel.

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"WORDSMITH is a very introverted series."

ROSS: Particularly with artists.

PAUL: *Especially Dave Ross, right? — send him to Australia.*

ROSS: Well, I was thinking about Indonesia — the South Pacific.

PAUL: *"Money for nothing, chicks for free." Dave, with WORDSMITH, are you going to be getting into any Doc Savage-type characters?*

DARRIGO: The series is designed to explore the whole range of pulp characters that were back in the Thirties. So right now I see this as every issue will be different characters, actually pastiches, of pulp characters. In the first issue for example, we had a western character, and a jungle adventurer type of character. Now those were the mainstays of pulp fiction back in the Thirties, especially the westerns. In the second issue we go with private eyes, and of course the private eye genre was created in the pulps. In the third issue we had a character based on the Shadow, and in number four we have a Doc Savage-type of character. So in every issue you're getting a different type of hero, and all are based on types that were made in the Thirties in the actual magazines.

PAUL: *What I really liked about the first issue is that you deal with the creative process — the blocks — sometimes things don't work and you've got to get out and interact with other people. You've got a part in the story where he meets this guy who is a newsstand operator and in their conversation you trigger other ideas for the Wordsmith character to go back and get to work again. Are you going to be doing more of that — getting inside the mind of the writer?*

DARRIGO: Yes, maybe to the detriment of the series to some extent. It's a very introverted series — readers don't want to get into the mind of the writer that much.

ROSS: I wouldn't be that concerned about it, because it's that aspect that makes it somewhat novel, and because of that it's going to have an attraction.

PAUL: *Any one of us here wants to get started, and we have to have an idea from somewhere. And it deals with a very common problem that creative people go through all the time, and anybody getting started has that problem, too. What saves some people is the repetitions — what is safe, and what I like in WORDSMITH is this guy is trying to break away from the cliche. Even though he may be in a cliched genre, he wants to do his great novel. But he enjoys doing the pulp material as well, and he's going through this transition. So it's really a people story.*

ROSS: On the one hand, you're not going to break the fifty thousand sales mark, but on the other hand you're providing the marketplace with something that isn't there; you're providing something that is quite well done, and there is plenty of room for this sort of thing in the market. You're going to build a following.

DARRIGO: I must say, to get this back toward comics — in a way, there are a lot of analogies to the design of WORDSMITH: . . to comic-book people. I've always thought writers like **Roy Thomas** and **Denny O'Neil** are capable of these kinds of ideas, but for personal or business reasons they do the mainstream work. But you always have the feeling that they want to break out of it and do a great novel. Even using **Stan Lee** as an example — he was another example of being a comic writer who always wanted to do something more serious and have people see his work and respect him for work other than his comic work, but he stayed in comics and he enjoyed it.

Next issue, in the sushi-soaked conclusion, this daring dialogue with dual Daves turns to the challenges of comics storytelling versus movie storyboarding, animation, opportunity and all about ALPHA FLIGHT, including the kind of women Puck would like . . .the while beginning and concluding with an appreciation of the contribution made to comics by the collaboration of Lee & Kirby!

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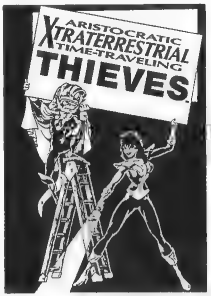
X-THIEVES PREVIEW



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LETTERER
T.R. DAVIDSON

EDITOR / CREATOR
DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT

OH, HEY-- WHAT A RELIEF TO HAVE THESE! THE BLACKMAIL WAS RUINING ME! ARE YOU SURE THIS IS ALL THE COPIES?
I'M POSITIVE, MR. BAWOOWAUGH!
BIANCA--ONLY FOOLS ARE POSITIVE.
ARE YOU SURE?
POSITIVE!

ARISTOCRATIC X-TRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES

ARISTOCRATIC X-TRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES
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DON'T WORRY, WHEN YOU DEAL WITH F&B AQUISITIONS, SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED!
AH--SO IF YOU MISSED SOME OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS YOU WILL REFUND MY MONEY?
NO.
BUT--?
BY THE WAY, THOSE ARE SOME PRETTY KINKY PICTURES--I'D DESTROY 'EM REAL SOON IF I WERE YOU
UH, YES, WELL-- YOU HAVE MY UNDYING THANKS FOR--
NO THANKS ARE NEEDED--
-- JUST OUR FEE!
THANKS FOR DEMARITING IT SO PROMPTLY.
EXCUSE US FOR NOT SEEING YOU OUT-- BUT WE MUST DASH!
QUITE ALL RIGHT, I ASSURE YOU! PLEASE GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS-- I'LL FIND MY OWN WAY OUT.
IMAGINE THAT-- HONEST THIEVES! MY ASSOCIATES WARNED ME NOT TO USE THEM--
-- I SHALL HAVE TO TELL THEM HOW PROFESSIONALLY--
WHAT?!
CIAO, BABE!
WHIZZ
TA TA!
ANOTHER JOB, YOU KNOW! BUSY, BUSY! BUT IT'S THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR SUCCESS!
YOU--YOU THIEVES! BRING THAT NECKLACE BACK-- IT'S BEEN IN MY FAMILY FOR MILLENIA! AND YOU CLAIMED YOU NEVER STOLE FROM CLIENTS!
FROM FAR DOWN THE HALLWAY A HAIRY VOICE ECHOES BACK, "CONTRACTS OVER--YOU'RE NOT A CLIENT ANYMORE!"

SO, WHAT'RE WE SUPPOSED TO STEAL FROM THIS EARTH PLACE, FREDT
SOME ART-- THE GUY THAT HIRED US CALLED IT 'EARTH'S GREATEST TREASURE!'
LOOK, FRED-- IT'S FORD!
300,000 KM/SECOND IT'S NOT JUST A GOOD IDEA S THE LAW
COME ON -- STOP AND PICK ME UP!
AREN'T YOU GOING TO STOP FOR HIM?
NAH-- WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE NEAR BETELGEUSE.
AW-- THAT'S THE FORTY-SECOND SHIP TO IGNORE ME!
FORD MAY HAVE BEEN IGNORED BUT THE BMWP SPEED WASN'T!
!! LIGHT EXEEDS :
BING!
BING!
BING!
HOT KABOOKIES-- JUST WHAT I NEEDED TO SPICE UP THE DAY-- A SPEEDER! WORKING THE RED SHIFT IS USUALLY SO-O-O-O BORING!
RED-5 TO BASE-- I'M IN PURSUIT OF A SPEEDER!
WE COPY, RED-5.
WHAT-- I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS RAG SAYS MY ACTION #1 IS WORTH? TEN LOUSY CREDITS!
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'VE GOT TIME TRAVEL-- EVERY-ONE GOES BACK AND GETS A COPY OR THREE! NOW, SOMETHING REALLY RARE LIKE EARLY SOUTHERN--
UH OH-- WE'VE GOT A COP ON OUR TAIL!
WOOF WOOF!
I'LL LOSE HIM, THOUGH! THIS CAR'S SOUND TO BE MORE MANEUVERABLE THAN HIS LITTLE CYCLE!
HEY-- YOU'RE REALLY PUTTING THE OL' FREDMOBILE THROUGH THE PACES!
BIANCA-- IF I'VE TOLD YOU ONCE, I'VE TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES--
--DON'T CALL IT THE FREDMOBILE!
ACTUALLY, YOU'VE ONLY TOLD ME 812 TIMES.

DO YOU WANT TO GET OUT AND WALK?
THIS IS THE POLICE!
PULL OVER IMMEDIATELY!
PULL OVER?! WHERE?!
IT IS A KIND OF STUPID THING TO SAY-- BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT MUCH FROM A COP WHO BROADCASTS A SIREN OVER THE RADIO!
ALL RIGHT, BUDDY-- WHERE'S THE SUPERNOVA? NOW, STEP OUT OF YOUR CAR, PLEASE.
STEP OUT OF THE--? LOOK, VACUUM-FOR-BRAINS--
FRED, HIS SUGGESTION MAY NOT BE THAT BAD! MAYBE THE OFFICER WOULD BE MORE UNDERSTANDING...
...IF WE DIDN'T HAVE A CAR!
HEH HEH! GOOD IDEA!
FRED PAUSES THOUGHTFULLY FOR A MOMENT, THEN HIS FINGERS DANCE ACROSS ROWS OF BUTTONS. WITH A SLIGHTLY MANIACAL CHORTLE, AND A CONSPIRATORIAL GIGGLE FROM BRANDA, HE PRESSES THE FINAL BUTTON!
IN AN EERIE, VACUUM-INDUCED SILENCE...
...THE FREDMOBILE BEGINS TO CHANGE!
THE CAR'S SMALL FLAPS UNFOLD...
...AND UNFOLD AGAIN--AND AGAIN--AND, IMPOSSIBLY, AGAIN!
THE CHASSIS TELESCOPES, EXPANDS, AND TELESCOPES SOME MORE!
STRANGE, LETHAL-LOOKING PROTRUSIONS APPEAR ALL OVER THE CAR'S SURFACE!
AND SUDDENLY...

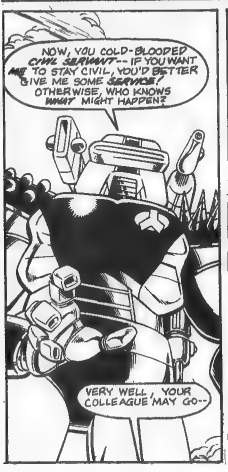
...THE FREDMOBILE IS NO MORE!
EGULP! M-MY--WHAT AN... INTERESTING DESIGN!
ISN'T IT, THOUGH!
NOW--WHAT WERE YOU SAYING JUST A MOMENT AGO?
I THINK IT WAS SOMETHING ABOUT SUPERHOMES FRED...
HEH, HEH--JUST A LITTLE JOKE--POLICE HUMOR! SAY--YOU DIDN'T THINK I WAS GOING TO GIVE YOU A TICKET, DID YOU?
I'M SURE THIS WAS YOUR FIRST OFFENSE SO I'LL LET YOU OFF WITH A WARNING! BUT DON'T LET ME CATCH YOU DOING IT AGAIN--please?
WOW--I DIDN'T KNOW THE FREDMOBILE COULD BECOME A BATTLE CRUISER! YOU ONLY SHOWED ME SMALL STUFF--LIKE THE MILLENIUM FALCON!
"WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU GOT PROGRAMMED INTO IT?"
TOUCH!
"ALL SORTS OF NEAT STUFF, BIANCA."
"CAN IT DO VOLTRON?"
NAH--VOLTRON IS SO GAUCHE! BESIDES--
--THIS CAR CAN BECOME THINGS THAT WOULD BLOW VOLTRON AWAY!
TIME TO LAY IN A COURSE FOR EARTH!
GET OUT THE RAND-MCNALLY--OKAY?

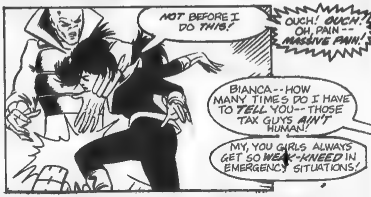
SECONDS LATER...
HERE WE ARE, BIANCA: NEW YORK CITY! YOU WON'T FIND A MORE WRETCHED HIVE OF SCUM AND VILLAINY ON THIS PLANET!
VIOLA--INSTANT PRIMITIVE TRANSPORTATION! WE'LL FIT RIGHT IN!
GOOD--I'D HATE TO BE CONSPICUOUS!
LEAVING THE SMELL OF BURNING PSEUDO-RUBBER BEHIND THEM, THE CAR SCREECHES OUT OF THE ALLEY!
HEY--THAT'S ONE THING YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON FROM ME--A LOW PROFILE!
UH, RIGHT... DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS PUNK MINGLE SOUTH IS, BY THE WAY?
NO PROB!
IN A CITY WHERE DRIVING SKILL IS MEASURED IN THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF OBSCENITIES SHOUTED AT YOU, FRED DISCOVERS HE'S A BORN MANHATTAN MOTORIST! HE SURPASSES THE BEST! EVEN THE CABBIES ARE FORCED TO ADMIRE HIS STYLE!
2
--WE'VE GOT A HEIST TO MAKE!
I MAY BE CUTE, BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY LITTLE ASS AROUND HERE!
WATCH IT! AND NO MORE SNIDE REMARKS--WE'RE WORKING NOW!
THE DEXTEROUS DUO SLIPS QUICKLY INTO THE BUILDING.
387
A MINUTE PASSES...
TWO...
FOURTEEN BLOCKS AND EIGHTY-NINE OBSCENITIES LATER...
YOU KNOW, THE CAR HAS A SET OF BRAKES, TOO! YOU COULD HAVE TRIED USING THEM ONCE OR TWICE!
HA--REAL DRIVERS NEVER USE BRAKES! NOW MOVE YOUR CUTE LITTLE ASS--
THREE...
HEY--AREN'T YOU TWO COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS?
HEH, HEH! I HAVEN'T HAD A JOB THIS EASY IN YEARS!
YEP!
WAIT'LL I TELL THE KID!
WHILE WE'RE STILL IN THE VICINITY OF EARTH, I'D LIKE TO PICK UP A FEW THINGS!
SET THE WAY BACK MACHINE FOR THE 15TH CENTURY.
YOUR WISH IS SOMETIMES MY COMMAND, O SHORT ONE!
WHILE...

AS HE WALKS TO THE COMMAND CHAIR, HIS FEET SEEM TO SLITHER ACROSS THE FLOOR -- THE LEATHERY RUSTLE THE ONLY SOUND ECHOING THROUGHOUT THE VAST SHIP.
W-2--MONITOR THE SHIP. INFORM ME OF ITS PROGRESS.
YES, SIR.
1040--BE PREPARED TO PURSUE THE SHIP.
YES, SIR.
I SHALL BIDE MY TIME--AWAIT THE PROPER MOMENT TO MAKE MY MOVE.
SOON, THEY WILL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE--
--FOR THE MOST HEINOUS CRIME IMAGINABLE. A CRIME FOR WHICH NO PUNISHMENT IS TOO SEVERE -- THE CRIME OF TAX EVASION.
SIR--THE SHIP IS NOW RETROGRADING THROUGH THE TIME CONTINUUM.
THANK YOU, W-2. I AM GRANTING LEVEL THREE INFORMATION CLEARANCE TO 1040. ALLOW HIM TO ACCESS YOUR DATA, W-2.
1040--PREPARE TO DUPLICATE THEIR RETROGRESSION THROUGH TIME.
YES, SIR.
WHA--?
RESISTANCE IS FUTILE.
PANSAFREDICOPACOG--I AM AN AGENT OF THE I.R.S. I HAVE APPREHENDED YOUR ACCOMPLICE. CAPITULATE AND YOUR COLLEAGUE SHALL RECEIVE NO LASTING PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT.

HERE IS A LIST OF CHARGES--
AT AGE 4, SOLD FRUIT DRINKS TO FRIENDS. PROFIT--1.67 CREDITS. TAX PAID--ZERO. FINE, PLUS ACCRUED PENALTIES--10,653.07 CREDITS.
AT AGE 5--
FRED-- YOU SOLD LEMONADE AS A KID?
NAW-- BANQUINES!
LOOK--JUST GIVE ME THE TOTAL!

VERY WELL, THE CURRENT TOTAL OF DELINQUENT TAXES, FINES, AND PENALTIES IS 23,704,803,404.84 CREDITS.
25 TRILLION!
IS THAT ALL--?
NO PROBLEM! IF I'D KNOWN IT WAS SUCH A TRIFLING AMOUNT I WOULD'VE PAID MUCH EARLIER! I'VE GOT THE CASH IN THE CAR!
YOU WHAT--? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
JUST GETTING THE MAN HIS MONEY!
YOU'D BETTER NOT BE RUNNING OUT ON ME YOU LITTLE--


NOW, YOU COLD-BLOODED CYBE SERVANT-- IF YOU WANT ME TO STAY CIVIL, YOU'D BETTER GIVE ME SOME SERVICE! OTHERWISE, WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN?
VERY WELL, YOUR COLLEAGUE MAY GO--


NOT BEFORE I DO THIS!
OUCH! OUCH!! OH, PAIN -- MASSIVE PAIN!
BIANCA--HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU-- THOSE TAX GUYS AIN'T HUMAN!
MY, YOU GIRLS ALWAYS GET SO INCAPACITATED IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS!

LATER, BACK AT THE THIEVES' OFFICE, THEIR CLIENT COMES CALLING...
I TRUST YOU'RE SATISFIED?
OH, YES! FINALLY-- AFTER 1000 YEARS--THE EARTH'S GREATEST TREASURE IS MINE AGAIN!

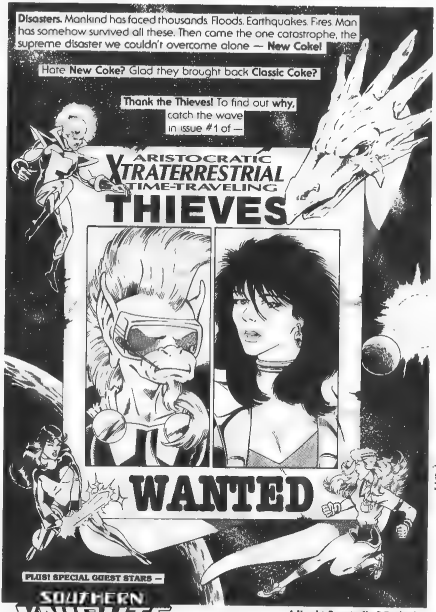
HOW HE CAN CONSIDER THE ORIGINAL ART TO THE EARTH'S GREATEST GRAPHIC NOVEL, EARTH'S GREATEST TREASURE--
--IS BEYOND ME!

"THE CONTINUITY INQUISITION VIGILANTLY PATROLS THE TIMEWAYS PROTECTING PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES FROM INTERFERENCE BY UNSCRUPULOUS TIME TRAVELLERS - THEY ALSO TAKE ALL THE FUN OUT OF TIME TRAVEL!"
--THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE
C.I. MAIN HEADQUARTERS...
DANNY-- DROP EVERYTHING AND DROP IT NOW! WE'VE GOT BIG TROUBLES!
BIG TROUBLES? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, MR. TARKAS?
JUST THE BIGGEST CRISIS I'VE EVER SEEN! IT'S DEVELOPING RIGHT NOW ON PLANET EARTH!
UNLESS IT'S AVERTED, IT'LL MEAN THE END OF GALACTIC CIVILIZATION AS WE KNOW IT!
THE END OF--? BUT, BOSS, WHAT COULD BE THAT SERIOUS?
CRISIS HOTLINE
NEW UNIVERSE FORMING--DISASTER IMMINENT!
CRISIS ON EARTH-666--PROBLEMS COULD BE BEASTLY!
SECRET WAR BREWING--LOCATION UNKNOWN
WAIT, I KNOW! WAVES OF CHAOS ARE SPREADING ACROSS THE UNIVERSE DESTROYING--
NO, IT'S WORSE THAN THAT!
WORSE? YOU DON'T MEAN THAT GUY FROM BEYOND IS LOOSE AGAIN, DO YOU?
NO, IT'S MUCH WORSE THAN EVEN THAT!
BUT MR. TARKAS--
--THOSE ARE THE WORST DISASTERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CONTINUITY INQUISITION! NOTHING COULD POSSIBLY BE WORSE THAN THEM!
THIS CRISIS IS!
B-BUT WHAT IS IT?
THE FORMULA TO COCA-COLA HAS BEEN STOLEN!
GASP! THEN-- WE'RE DOOMED!

"EARTH--MOSTLY HARMLESS"
--THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE
COCA-COLA HEADQUARTERS, ATLANTA, GEORGIA...
WE KNOW WHO TOOK THE FORMULA! I SAY WE ISSUE AN ULTIMATUM TO THEM!
IF PEPSI DOESN'T RETURN IT, WE HIT 'EM WITH EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT!
YEAH--WIPE THE BASTARDS OUT!
Coke
THEN WE'RE AGREED! IF THEY DON'T RETURN IT--
--WE USE OUR NUCLEAR ARSENAL!
BUT SURELY THEY HAVE COMPUTER RECORDS! SOMEONE MUST REMEMBER THE FORMULA!
THE THIEF WAS VERY THOROUGH--BOTH COMPUTER AND HUMAN MEMORIES WERE ERASED!
WHAT CAN WE DO? EARTH WILL DESTROY ITSELF WITHOUT THAT FORMULA!
AND WITHOUT HUMANITY, OUR CONTINUITY WILL CEASE TO EXIST!
IF ONLY WE KNEW WHO TOOK THE FORMULA!
WE KNOW EXACTLY WHO TOOK THE FORMULA!
WHAT?!
THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S GET IT BACK!
NO! FOR REASONS OF SECURITY, WE CANNOT DO ANYTHING!
BUT I CAN TELL YOU THIS--IF THE C.I. ACTED DIRECTLY AGAINST THE THIEF, THE RESULT WOULD BE AS BAD AS IF WE DID NOTHING AT ALL!

DAMMIT--ARE WE GOING TO JUST SIT BY AND LET THE CONTINUITY GO TO HELL IN A HAND-BASKET?!
IF WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING, WHY NOT GET SOMEONE ELSE TO DO IT FOR US?
DANNY--THAT'S BRILLIANT! TRULY A VERY GOOD IDEA!
WELL, I HAVE ONE EVERY NOW AND THEN, YOU KNOW!
"BUT WHO SHOULD WE GET, DANNY? WE NEED SOMEONE WHO CAN BREAK THE BEST ELECTRONIC SECURITY SYSTEM IN THE GALAXY!
"SOMEONE WHO CAN MOVE THROUGH THE TIGHTEST NET OF SENSORS UNSEEN!
"AND, MOST OF ALL, SOMEONE WHO COULDN'T CONCEIVABLY BE CONNECTED WITH US!"
CAPTAIN KARRAS REPORTING--WITH PRISONERS!
DANNY, WE NEED THE VERY BEST THERE IS!
WE NEED--
NO, BOSS--DON'T SAY IT!
FRED AND BIANCA!
FRED, DO YOU GET THE IDEA WE'VE MISSED SOMETHING?
YEAH--I HAVEN'T BEEN THIS LOST SINCE I TRIED TO START READING CEREBUS WITH ISSUE #2!
WELL, SIR--AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, FRED AND BIANCA ARE OURS! SHALL I LOCK THEM UP AND THROW AWAY THE KEY?

FRED & BIANCA ARE BACK!


Disasters. Mankind has faced thousands. Floods. Earthquakes. Fires. Man has somehow survived all these. Then came the one catastrophe, the supreme disaster we couldn't overcome alone — New Coke!
Hate New Coke? Glad they brought back Classic Coke?
Thank the Thieves! To find out why, catch the wave in issue #1 of —
ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING
THIEVES
WANTED
PLUS! SPECIAL GUEST STARS —
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#1

ON SALE NOW

COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION
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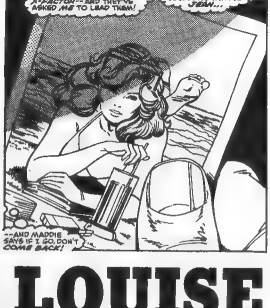
"I figured my wife would supply the

BUT MY CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART RETURNS AND I GET A CALL... SURPRISE...JEAN ISN'T DEAD AFTER ALL!
I WANT TO GO TO HER! SEE HER! TOUCH HER! TALK TO HER! THERE'S SO MUCH I'VE NEVER WANTED ANYTHING / AND ANOTHER LIFE...


MY OLD TEAM MATES HAVE FORMED A NEW ORGANIZATION— X-FACTOR— AND THEY'VE ASKED ME TO LEAD THEM!
SO I, RAW...NOT WALK... TO THE NEAREST AIRPORT... TO X-FACTOR...TO JEAN...
...AND MADDIE SAYS IF I GO, DON'T COME BACK!

WALT & LOUISE SIMONSON

The multitude of readers of Marvel's series about super-powered mutants have received good news in recent months about X-FACTOR, the series featuring the original members of the X-Men. First, Louise Simonson, longtime editor of X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS, and more recently the co-creator and writer of the delightful POWER PACK, took over as X-FACTOR's writer. Then, some months later, she was joined on the series by her husband, Walt Simonson, who has just completed a stunning run of issues of THOR, first as both its writer and artist, and more lately, just as its writer.

In the following interview, conducted at the Simonson apartment in early September 1986, Walt and "Weezie" discuss their plans for the series, and their views on its principal characters. As you will see, the Simonsons take neither themselves nor their work too seriously, and could probably win the title of Best Husband and Wife Stand-Up Comedy Team in comics (even if they did spend most of the interview sitting down). But beneath the repartee is a clear love for the comics medium and their characters.

So, draw up a chair, put a Pink Floyd album on the stereo, and get out an ice cream cone (you'll see why): the show is about to begin!

PETER SANDERSON: *Why did the two of you decide to do X-FACTOR?*

WALT SIMONSON: It was the money. *(Laughter.)* I just decided, I've been doing comics a long time, I'm one

All art accompanying this interview is © 1986 MVCI

quality and I could retire early."

of the old hacks, and I'm just in it for the bucks, so I'll be up front about it. *(Laughter.)* I figured my wife would supply the quality, and I could retire early.

PETER: *Could it have anything to do with the fact that you two had never collaborated before as writer and artist?*

WALT: I don't think that was seriously a reason. I don't think we were moping around the house feeling we were suffering from a lack of having worked together as writer and artist — we had worked together as writer/artist and editor on Marvel's BATTLESTAR GALACTICA series.

I think, in my case, part of the reason was that before I was writing my own stuff, I had really made a practice of working with as many good writers as I could. I think on balance, I got to work with a good many guys who were quite good. And I feel, in an entirely unbiased way, that my wife is one of the best writers in comics. Up to this point I haven't had a chance to work with her, and I thought this would be a good chance to try it. And the money was good, too. *(Laughter.)*

PETER: *Louise, why did you decide to do X-FACTOR? You came to it before your husband did.*

LOUISE: I came to do it with trepidation, at first. **Bob Layton** had originally done the book, and was apparently late on a deadline, and I was asked by the editor, **Bob Harras**, if I would do a fill-in issue. As it happened, once I began writing this fill-in issue — which was never used, because **Bob Layton** did indeed get his story in — I began to think of all the things that I thought should be done with the characters. I made a list of all these things and gave them to **Bob Harras**. We had discussed doing the annual, and I thought maybe I could use some of the ideas in the annual, or maybe if **Layton** likes them he could use some of them in the regular series. A lot of those ideas are now being implemented in the work that I'm doing.

After **Layton** got off the book, Bob asked me if I'd like to take it over. I had liked these characters before, though I wasn't sure I liked them in their reincarnation in the beginning — but I found I liked them very much, and there was lots of room to play.

PETER: *Does your affection for the characters have anything to do with your being X-MEN editor for so long?*

LOUISE: I'm sure it has a great deal to do with it, actually. Also, as I understand it, one of the reasons I was asked to do the regular series is because both **Chris Claremont** and **Ann Nocenti** had suggested that they would like it a whole lot if I took over X-FACTOR when **Bob Layton** got off. Chris and I have always worked well together, and it's been a lot of fun working with him.

PETER: *This is how the Mutant Massacre storyline evolved?*

LOUISE: As I remember, Chris had an idea for a single issue where he was going to use the deaths of a lot of Morlocks to set up the introduction of a new group of super-villains. And to my point of view, it seemed a massacre of this size was too large to do in a single issue. And I had been planning to take my guys, X-FACTOR, down into the Morlock tunnels to do some stuff anyway. So I said, "Gee, Chris, how about if we do an extravaganza?" And once we started talking about it, it got bigger and bigger, and we brought in POWER PACK, and we brought in THOR, and **Ann Nocenti** eventually did a story with Sabretooth in DAREDEVIL, and if we had had more time to set it up, everyone could have played, as far as we were concerned. In fact, Chris and I have discussed a storyline for next year that I

Phoenix rising on the cover of X-FACTOR #13.

"It was horrible. I don't know why

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Walt Simonson
Occupation: Symbol-monger
Born: 2 September — Knoxville, Tennessee
Credits: Writer-artist: THOR, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, STAR SLAMMERS. Writer: THOR, BALDER THE BRAVE, THE ETERNALS, ANIMAX, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (Marvel's movie adaptation). Artist: X-FACTOR, MANHUNTER, STAR WARS, METAL MEN, X-MEN, BATMAN, DETECTIVE, CAPTAIN FEAR, HERCULES UNBOUND, X-MEN/TEEN TITANS crossover book, ALIEN (movie adaptation for HEAVY METAL), CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (movie adaptation for Marvel).
Favorite Novel: THE LORD OF THE RINGS by J.R.R. Tolkien
Favorite Restaurant: Weezie's Vegetarian Diner
Goal in Life: Getting a lot of money and retiring early.

think we're going to have to set up far enough in advance so everybody can play, if they want to, and that one will be a real extravaganza. This is just the beginning!

PETER: *Can you drop any hints as to what this extravaganza might consist of?*

LOUISE: Uhh…oh, death and destruction. It'll be great. *(Laughter.)*

PETER: *How hard was it to coordinate all these Massacre stories?*
WALT: It was a pain in the neck.
LOUISE: It was horrible. I don't know why we're thinking of doing this again. We must be out of our minds.
WALT: I wouldn't even dream of suggesting we're only in it for the dollars. *(Laughter.)*
LOUISE: I think a theme is developing to this interview.
WALT: Yes — what's that **Pink Floyd** DARK SIDE OF THE MOON cut? The clink of coins runs through the entire song. It's great.
PETER: *Does this have anything to do with your great affection for Carl Barks' UNCLE SCROOGE stories?*
WALT: I'd like to become Uncle Scrooge.

LOUISE: A role model. Uncle Scrooge is your role model?
WALT: Absolutely. I want the kind of swimming pool he had. He had a money bin 99 feet deep in silver dollars, and he swam in it. I would like to indulge myself. If it's good enough for an old duck from Scotland, it's good enough for me.
PETER: *Do you have the first dime you ever made?*
WALT: No — I have some of the first drawings I ever did, but no one will ever see them but me. I'm keeping them hidden.
LOUISE: Sometimes, when some young guy shows up who's embarrassed about his work, you pull out your old drawings and show them to him.
WALT: And tell him to go home and forget it. *(Laughter.)* I don't need the competition. But, getting back to the Massacre, it was a pain in the neck coordinating the stories.
LOUISE: And there were glitches.
WALT: Sure, there are glitches here and there. Part of the fun of doing comics is working as a team. For me, anyway. I think for Weezie as well.
LOUISE: Oh yeah.
WALT: It's a little like a playground and you all get to play in it?
LOUISE: Yeah, it's not any fun swinging on a swing by yourself, at least for us.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Louise Simonson a/k/a Louise Jones a/k/a Weezie
Occupation: Symbol-monger
Born: 26 September — Atlanta, Georgia
Credits: Editor: (at Warren) EERIE, CREEPY, VAMPIRELLA; (at Marvel) X-MEN, NEW MUTANTS, STAR WARS, KA-ZAR, CONAN, LONGSHOT, FIRESTAR, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, SHOGUN WARRIORS, X-MEN/TEEN TITANS. Writer: X-FACTOR, POWER PACK (co-creator), RED SONJA, STARRIORS, SPELLBINDER limited series (forthcoming), MARVEL TEAM-UP, WEB OF SPIDER-MAN, and a forthcoming romance comics novel.
Favorite Comics Series: Early Lee-Ditko AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
Favorite Novel: THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING by T.H. White
Favorite Restaurant: The Indian Oven
Goal in Life: (after hearing Walt's) "Sounds good to me."

WALT: It's just a lot of fun to go through these aggravations and tortures and crazy-making events to try to produce something that you would never be able to produce on your own. You wouldn't have the time, you wouldn't have the energy, and you wouldn't think of a lot of that stuff. A lot of stuff develops in a team effort that's part of the result of all these different minds trying to come up with ideas based on a central theme or plot or whatever.

LOUISE: I think that Chris' point of view and mine and Walt's were all slightly different perceptions of the same event.

WALT: Some stuff is as simple as the fact that when **John Bogdanove** drew Arclight in POWER PACK, she had a much different figure than I gave her in X-FACTOR. But I went back and did a little bit of revision work in my book after I'd seen what John had done.
PETER: *Did you have joint plotting sessions with Chris?*
LOUISE: We might have gotten together for dinner once. We talked a lot on the phone.
WALT: We talked a lot in the office about it.

we're thinking of doing this again."

LOUISE: And exchanged a lot of copies of the stuff we had typed up back and forth.

WALT: Partly, what we were trying to do in the crossover was not create a string of beads where you had to go from one bead to the next bead to the next bead in order to follow the entire storyline. What we were trying to do, rather, was to take several separate skeins and intertwine them in such a way that in the end they formed a coherent whole, but then unwound and went in their own directions. And you can follow any one skein through the Massacre: you can read X-MEN, you can read X-FACTOR, or you can read THOR, NEW MUTANTS, POWER PACK, or DAREDEVIL without really having to go over and read all the other books. But, of course, then you don't get the whole picture. You get a story that makes sense through each of the individual books, but there's a much bigger story going on, and only by getting hold of the whole thing can you see how the whole picture develops. It was not an effort to create a string of beads. It was an effort to create a network or a web.

LOUISE: It's going to be real interesting to get all of the Massacre out and start getting letters on it to see if everyone was able to follow it. There'll be a lot of requests for no-prizes.

WALT: We've already had a couple this week because people's hair color was different in a couple of the issues, stuff like that. Those are the ones you expect. I'm looking forward to letters where guys have worked out the time elements, so when so-and-so was in the tunnel, he was really over there with somebody else, so how could he possibly have done this. When *you* get up to the Mutant Massacre in MARVEL SAGA, Peter, and try to coordinate all this, *(laughter)* we'd like to make this the toughest problem you ever had to solve. And if this isn't tough enough, we're going to try to make it even tougher next year.

PETER: *It's wonderful that you're always thinking of me.*

WALT: We only have your welfare in mind. *(Laughter.)*

LOUISE: You got any more questions?

PETER: *What do you think about the controversy over X-Factor's tactics of pretending to be normal human beings hunting down mutant "menaces," and then secretly training them to pass as ordinary human beings?*

WALT: May I say — ?

LOUISE: Sure.

WALT: I think there's a *lot* of potential story material in exactly this point. I think we've only begun to mine a lot of that.

LOUISE: Yeah! What we eventually will find out is that there was more to the original decision to create X-Factor than even X-Factor are aware of, having to do with Cameron Hodge and his role in it.

PETER: *Do you think X-Factor is pursuing a morally or politically incorrect way of dealing with the situation of mutants?*

LOUISE: I think they're out of their minds. *But* there's a reason for it, which we will all find out. Then everyone will say, "Oh! That makes sense!" I know what the reason is and eventually the readers will, too.

PETER: *Do the X-Factor members know what the reason is?*

LOUISE: No, not yet they don't. They're beginning to wonder. There have been clues dropped. When will they find out?

WALT: Not for several issues yet.

LOUISE: Not until we've done stuff with Angel, stuff with Scott…

WALT: They're all going to have much more immediate concerns very shortly. When they become of less immediate concern, they're going to be able to go back and sort out some of that stuff.

LOUISE: They may not be able to sort things out until a lot of bad things happen first, and we've got Apocalypse and the Four Horsemen yet to contend with.

WALT: There's lots of stuff going on…

LOUISE: And that may have something to do with their realization of what's going on.

NEW BLOOD

ART BY ROBERT WALKER / BILL BLACK

Have you ever heard of ROBERT WALKER? Probably not but you will be hearing a great deal about this new artist soon to emerge onto the comic book scene. He's young, dependable and his talent is striking. The women that he draws are...awesome. Feminine, sensitive, sensual. No ugly, musclebound heroines here.

We are so excited about Robert's work that we had him design a new look MS. VICTORY. The resulting design is pictured at left. Like we said...awesome. Looks like Mr. Walker is a natural for FEMFORCE. We tried him out on a fill-in issue and he came through again. Check out the panels below. The story is entitled "GIRL TALK" and it's an introspective look at Joan Wayne and Tara Fremont. For action we threw in the origin of SYNN. It works.

We think you'll like this book. We're pushing it back on our schedule to give you a chance to view this new art work. The issue is FEMFORCE No. 6, now shipping in November. It's worth the wait.

FEMFORCE 6

COMING IN NOVEMBER FROM

AC

$1.75 COLOR

"I was blinded by the dollar signs."

WALT: Yeah.
LOUISE: But something *is* really going on!
PETER: *Can we predict that a year from now X-Factor will be run very differently than it is now?*
LOUISE: We can only hope.
WALT: Maybe a year from now. But things will only be getting worse in the next four months.
LOUISE: They're going to get much worse before they get better.
PETER: *Do you think that with all these bad things coming up, the book runs the risk of getting too depressing?*
LOUISE: Ohhh...
PETER: *Here's the Angel on the verge of having his wings amputated.*

WALT: Hey, that's nothing compared to what happens to him eventually.
LOUISE: *(Laughter.)*
WALT: Better buy plenty of copies, kids. A collector's item for sure.
LOUISE: Chink chunk chunk chink chink!
WALT: *(Laughter.)*
LOUISE: Hear the clink of coins.
WALT: Quick, where's that Pink Floyd song?
LOUISE: What were we talking about?
WALT: I don't know. I was blinded by the dollar signs in my eyes. *(Laughter.)*
PETER: *So in twelve issues X-Factor will be run very differently?*
LOUISE: It's hard to predict what's going to happen twelve issues from now, because sometimes a story you think will take a single issue takes two issues, even three. There will be a lot of major changes. Will X-Factor as we know it even exist?
WALT: It might not.
LOUISE: One of the things we're in the process of doing right now is creating a batch of really good villains.
PETER: *Do you prefer to create new villains for the series rather than use villains they fought in X-MEN?*
LOUISE: Oh, something old, something new.
WALT: Something borrowed, something blue.
LOUISE: We've got Apocalypse, who's new. And the Four Horsemen are new. And we're reviving the Master Mold. We *love* the Master Mold.
WALT: Weezie's writing a real good Master Mold. It's going to be a good rip-snorter fight in issue #14.
LOUISE: Yeah. Tell him what happens in it, 'cause you explain fights so well. You're dramatic. You do sound effects.
WALT: I'm not going to give anything away. They'll have to wait and see.

AND ALL ALONG I THOUGHT YOU WERE A MERE TELEKINETIC!
LISTEN TO ME, JEANIE! CANDY WAS ANGRY! SHE MISUNDERSTOOD WHEN SHE SAW US TOGETHER!
SHE WAS UPSET... THAT'S ALL! SHE HASN'T EVEN VISITED ME HERE! SHE MUST KNOW... IT'S BEEN IN THE NEWS!
AND WHAT SHE SAID... IT ISN'T TRUE!
NOT TRUE--? LOOK AT 2007?... WHAT'S HAPPENED TO JIM BECAUSE OF ME!

"Here's the Angel on the verge of having his wings amputated."

PETER: *They can't hear you do the sound effects when they read the interview, anyway.*
WALT: That's right. It would lose a lot in translation.
LOUISE: I think we last saw the Master Mold in HULK ANNUAL #7
WALT: In orbit.
LOUISE: He was in an orbiting space station.
PETER: *This is not the original Master Mold, then, from X-MEN* #15-16?
LOUISE: It's the Stephen Lang Master Mold.
PETER: *The one with Lang's mind.*
LOUISE: Yes, that's the key and clue.
WALT: He fell to Earth.
LOUISE: He burned as he fell. He fell in the Arctic. He fell, he burned, he cracked. But he was still sentient.
WALT: And then, after a while, he got up again. But, of course, he was still somewhat broken after his fall. So he put himself back together, and he went looking for mutants. And he found them.
LOUISE: He knows who the twelve mutants are, the key mutants around whom the others will rally. As Lang, he discovered this — and now he's going after them.

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GET THEM BEFORE THEY'RE GONE!

Renegade Press

"A hero is measured by the villain."

WALT: He also discovers there are a *lot* more mutants than anybody ever suspected.

WALT: That's as many clues as we're going to give.

PETER: *Might the Master Mold have any tie-in with X-MEN?*

LOUISE: It depends if Chris wants to play with the Master Mold. He's perfectly welcome, if he wants to. I obviously can't send the Master Mold into Chris's books to get those mutants who may or may not be part of his teams.

PETER: *What happens beyond the Master Mold?*

WALT: That's your question, honey — you're the writer, I'm just the artist.

PETER: *Do you co-plot the book?*

WALT: Co-ideas, maybe. "Co-plotter" is too strong. I think of some ideas. You see, what I've found as time goes by is that I think of an idea and once I say it, I forget it. It's gone. It's like a Teflon Memory. Once the idea is generated…

LOUISE: And it comes out your mouth…

WALT: And it comes out of my mouth, it's like a spirit child, and it's gone, it has its own life, it no longer belongs to me, and I've forgotten about it. I just make sure I tell Weezie all my good ideas. So she really constructs the stories. I'm not really a co-plotter in this book. But I have had some ideas. Some of the stuff on the Master Mold is mine. And, after the Master Mold, the penultimate fate of the Angel is probably the next major concern.

LOUISE: Yes, Apocalypse and his Four Horsemen will begin to make their moves.

PETER: *What made you decide to put the Angel through these horrible things?*

WALT: Chink chink chink chink clink chink chink clink.

LOUISE: *(Laughter.)* Visions of sugar plums danced in their heads. Let's see, why *did* we decide to do that?

WALT: The fact is he was really a dull guy.

LOUISE: He was handsome, he was cheerful…

WALT: He was a handsome guy, he got the girls, he was really boring. We thought we could make him un-boring. Also…

LOUISE: Now you get the real answer. *(Laughter.)*

WALT: Also, one of the problems with the original X-MEN in the 1980s Marvel Universe is that they really are mostly terribly underpowered. Over the twenty-five years of Marvel, there's been a fair amount of inflation of superhero abilities. I think it's just the nature of the business. Over twenty years ago, Thor fought Mr. Hyde, whose ability was to be able to pick up a telephone pole and bend it. If the current Thor, even as he was before I got hold of him, who breaks mountains and so on, ran up against Mr. Hyde now, and Mr. Hyde was at the same power level he was at twenty years ago, Mr. Hyde would be dust in about three seconds.

PETER: *The Cobra's a better example.*

WALT: Yes, Cobra's even better. The heroes are only as good as the bad guys they fight. That's what makes a hero. What makes Achilles is Hector. If Hector were a wimp or a lousy warrior, no one would ever remember Achilles. But Hector was the best, and Achilles beat Hector.

LOUISE: A hero is measured by the villain in the same way a villain is measured by the heroes that he comes up against.

WALT: I think this leads to an inevitable chain of events: if you want to maintain the drama of your stories, you slowly increase the powers of the villains. You have to overcome greater and greater obstacles. If a guy goes over the same hurdles time

Watch out, Cyke — Master Mold is comin' ta getcha!

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"How about a change for the worse."

after time, it's not going to be very interesting in a dramatic situation. So, over time, you get villains who are more powerful. A good example of that would be FANTASTIC FOUR #1 up to when Galactus hit (#48-50). From the early FF stories with the Skrulls who could turn into cows, up to the time the FF met a godlike power, is quite a nice progression, and I think that's a paradigm of what happens to superheroes and super-villains with time.

So what you have in X-FACTOR are several guys who are really terribly underpowered now. Cyclops is okay, because with the eyebeam he's got, it's a visual power, and it's indefinite enough so if we really charge him up more than he's ever been charged before, he could punch a hole through the center of the Earth, if necessary.

PETER: *Marvel Girl's power has already been stepped up recently.*

LOUISE: Yes. The telekinetics are up.

WALT: It's the kind of power that lends itself to being increased with time as is necessary. Whereas, Angel and the other two members are somewhat lesser in power. Angel's power is being able to fly seventy miles per hour. But you've got heroes and villains flying at the speed of sound or the speed of light!

LOUISE: You put Angel next to Captain Marvel, who turns into a beam of light…

WALT: She would eat him alive. The Beast's major power is being able to leap fourteen feet in the air and grab hold of a bar with his toes. That may be useful if you're fighting bars. But it's not really much of an ability in the current Marvel Universe. Iceman is a little different, because Iceman, we think, has a power that can be manipulated in ways that haven't been done before. For me the best current example is what **Alan Moore** has done with SWAMP THING. SWAMP THING hasn't been increased in abilities by walking into a radiation chamber and being shot up to superhuman levels, but Alan has taken a lot of potential in the character and done a lot of really wonderful things with it. I think in the same way — I hope — there are things that are possible with Iceman that just haven't been done. In the comic, it'll be a matter of retraining Iceman to use his power more effectively in order to create effects he really hasn't done before.

LOUISE: Or putting him in a position where he has to — or else. And he finds out he can!

WALT: Where you reach your moment of stress when you overcome your previous limitations.

The new Beast, due for a "surge of power."

PETER: *I think the problem is that the original X-Men were basically created as a bunch of kids with super-powers and now, over twenty years later, they've become a team of adults who have to deal with more powerful threats.*

WALT: Exactly. So the Beast and Angel are the members of the current team who are most due for a surge of power. Or perhaps they should be replaced as team members by other people who could cut the mustard.

PETER: *So these terrible things happening to the Angel could be a prelude to his leaving, or to better things happening to him?*

LOUISE: How about, "all of the above"?

WALT: Or how about a change for the worse? That's another option, you know.

PETER: *And it sounds as if, after the Angel's turn is over, the Beast will be in for something?*

WALT: That's certainly safe to say. We don't have in mind for him the precise sort of ideas that we've come up with for Angel.

LOUISE: But I just had an idea. I think I know what we can do with the Beast.

WALT: That's why we have these interviews, 'cause ideas come to you even if we can't reveal them. But you'll see the light bulb above my wife's head, and that means we're covered.

WALT: I think it's safe to say we'll be doing some major surgery, metaphorically speaking — perhaps — on the Beast.

PETER: *And on the Angel, not so metaphorically speaking.*

LOUISE: On the Angel, not metaphorically speaking at all.

WALT: Poor old Warren. Well, you know, he had a good life. He had money. He had girls.

LOUISE: And now he doesn't have any money and he doesn't have any girls and he doesn't have any wings. Poor Warren.

WALT: It's going to be tough.

PETER: *So his personality will change?*

LOUISE: We're stripping him of everything that made him a happy-go-lucky playboy, which was just a facade, anyway. I think nobody ever saw the real Warren and what was behind him and what motivated him. You take away his money and you take away his looks and you take away his wings and what have you got left? That's what we're trying to find out: Who Warren really is.

PETER: *His looks, too?*

LOUISE: Well, his wings. Maybe we'll rip off his face, too.

PETER: *He'll have to grow a beard.*

ALL: *(Laughter.)*

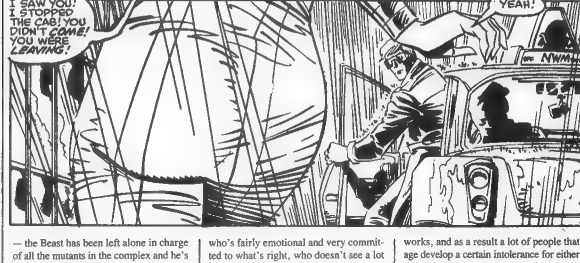
PETER: *How about the Beast's personality?*

LOUISE: I like the Beast's personality as it is. I think as the group is going to evolve, there's going to be a definite need for someone with his personality. This could all change, like tomorrow, but as I see it now, he's the one who's fairly level-headed, and they're going to need someone who's level-headed after all that's going to happen to them.

WALT: I think also he's the guy with a sense of humor, who maybe is able to bring a sense of perspective, to be a stabilizing influence.

LOUISE: During a lot of the stuff with Angel and the stuff with Scott — who goes to Alaska to look for his wife, Madelyne

"Of course, with that face and body,



— the Beast has been left alone in charge of all the mutants in the complex and he's certainly got his hands full. And we see him as a person who's fairly well able to handle people. And that's part of what his talent really is. He's got good interpersonal skills that some of the others seem to be somewhat lacking. I think that's going to be an important thing for the group to have in the difficult times ahead.

PETER: *And what about Iceman's personality?*

LOUISE: I'm not sure about Iceman yet. We'll have to see what develops with him. Right now I'm playing him as a young guy who's fairly emotional and very committed to what's right, who doesn't see a lot of greys. I figure he's an accountant for a reason. I figure he sees things in columns. I think he sees them in black and white, as good or evil. I don't think he's a guy who perceives a lot of shades of grey.

WALT: I think when you're eighteen to your early twenties, you go through a stage where you've figured out what all the rules are, and you're amazed that so many people who are older than you are such idiots as not to know them. So you really understand the way everything works, and as a result a lot of people that age develop a certain intolerance for either people who are younger than they are or people who are older than they are. We've all gone through those stages.

LOUISE: Or people with different perceptions of right and wrong.

WALT: Exactly.

LOUISE: I also think he's real emotional, empathetic, and hot-headed. He'll react emotionally to a situation, but he's also very sympathetic and quick to change if he perceives he's overreacting and gone a little too far. I find him a very likable character, and find the more I write him, the more I like him.

PETER: *And the X-Factor situation is full of greys.*

WALT: Oh, certainly. And it makes him nuts.

LOUISE: The readers may already have noticed that he seems concerned about what's going on. He seems to be maybe more worried about it than anyone else.

PETER: *In dealing with Scott and Jean you're dealing with what some Marvel aficionados have described as the classic Marvel romance.*

LOUISE: There is, however, a wrench in the works. Scott, at this point, is married.

PETER: *That has even become obvious to Jean by now.*

WALT: Yes, finally penetrated that cute, empty redhead.

LOUISE: You're going to get letters about that.

PETER: *So how do you feel about dealing with the Scott-Jean relationship, considering these complications?*

LOUISE: *(matter-of-factly)* I think that everyone should be as miserable as possible for as long as it takes.

PETER: *In comic books, not in real life?*

LOUISE: No, in real life all of my friends

how could she not have this power?''

should be happy, but in comic books all of my characters should be miserable. Actually — now is the Real Answer — the problem is really Scott's problem, not Jean's, because he's the one who's married and he's in love with Jean. He's also a real upright, straight arrow kind of guy, and I think in leaving his wife Madelyne to be with Jean . . . and I think it wasn't just the lure of Jean; it was the lure of X-Factor, of being leader, of being part of a team the way Walt and I enjoy being . . .

PETER: *Was Scott really in love with Madelyne — or was she just a substitute for Jean?*

LOUISE: I think she was a substitute for Jean. And I think it's torture for Scott, because it's not just Madelyne now: he has a son. And I think, in leaving Madelyne to go to Jean, he did something that was morally reprehensible to him. He was really caught in a very bad situation. He jumped the way his heart told him to jump. And he's been torturing himself about it ever since.

PETER: *And he has to decide whether to choose his responsibility to Madelyne and his son or going where his heart is.*

LOUISE: Right.

WALT: We're going to help him resolve that little difficulty in the not too distant future. But you won't like it. *(Laughter.)*

WALT and LOUISE: ICE CREAM! ICE CREAM! ICE CREAM BREAK!

(One round of ice cream later . . .)

PETER: *Boy, wasn't that great ice cream? Thank you!*

WALT: Hey, no problem. Enjoyed it myself.

LOUISE: It was great with or without chocolate sauce.

PETER: *So how will Scott end up handling these problems in his life? Will he be broken by them, or will he assert his leadership qualities?*

LOUISE: All of the above.

WALT: Well, if we have to sell copies, very badly is the answer.

LOUISE: He'll be broken by it, but assert his leadership qualities.

WALT: That's right, that's right. 'Cause he's tough.

LOUISE: I think what we're going to find here, actually . . .

WALT: *(mildly disappointed)* Are you going to be serious?

LOUISE: Yeah. Issue #14 is a story about programming. The Master Mold *is* Steven Lang; he's a robot programmed to behave in a certain way. Scott is a ''robot'' programmed by Xavier. We have a cop who's programmed by the law.

PETER: *Surely Scott is more than a robot.*

LOUISE: Well . . . in reality he is, but in the ''symbol-mongering'' of this particular story, in the way he's feeling and seeing himself, he's beginning to wonder if he's pulling his own strings or if his strings are being pulled for him in some predetermined way. The question is, does he have a choice?

PETER: *In other words, he questions what he has never questioned before, the way he was trained.*

WALT: Free will or predestination? You decide.

LOUISE: He begins to identify with the Master Mold, not that that stops him from . . .

PETER: *And what about Jean — the woman who, according to Candy Southern, has the mutant power to make people fall in love with her?*

LOUISE: And then destroy them.

WALT: Some power, huh?

LOUISE: It seems to me that all along that's been her power, and the Phoenix, when it put her back together, enhanced it as a survival mechanism. I think, honest to God, that's one of the things Jean does enormously well.

PETER: *She sounds like Miss Perfect.*

LOUISE: But, of course, with that face and that body, how could she not have this power? I guess you don't have to be a mutant to have it, right?

WALT: Unless you're one of the guys who falls in love with her and gets destroyed. Then you might not view her as Miss Perfect.

LOUISE: *(Laughter.)*

PETER: *You can't take it that seriously because then she becomes this awful sexist stereotype.*

LOUISE: Sex and death we're talking about here, folks.

WALT: Hey, we deal in symbol-mongering. It's our job.

PETER: *You don't mean to say that nobody can fall in love with Jean without being destroyed?*

LOUISE: We'll see.

WALT: We haven't put that to the complete test.

LOUISE: Let's see who else falls in love with her and then see what happens. Look what happened with Angel. Look what's happening to Scott even as we speak. Who's next? Iceman? How about Iceman?

WALT: Iceman? He's young. His hormones are going crazy.

LOUISE: We were discussing the destruction of X-Factor a little bit earlier and this seems as effective a way to destroy them as any.

PETER: *How will Jean cope with this if she believes Candy's accusation?*

LOUISE: That's the question, isn't it?

PETER: *Well, Jean's personality seems virtually perfect.*

LOUISE: Actually, I've been accused of

"Maybe a lot of adolescents feel like

doing a fairly bitchy Jean, which I've enjoyed. She's a lot more fun being bitchy than when she's being sweet. I think she actually has a lot of strength of character. She's had a great deal to cope with recently, and it's made her irritable on occasion in some of these stories. We'll see how she progresses. I'm actually having fun with her, too.

PETER: *Will we be seeing more of the secondary characters, like Artie, Skids, and Rusty, and further cast additions as well?*

LOUISE: Yes, indeed, you will. We have a story with **David Mazzucchelli**, that I think will be in issue #16, that deals with Rusty and Skids and their relationship, and also with Rusty's guilt over burning the woman he burned in issue one.

PETER: *Will Rusty, Skids, and others become members of the team?*

LOUISE: I have discussed with **Bob Harras** — and, actually, it's been approved — doing a mini-series involving some of these characters. We would like to be able to focus on them more closely, and we probably would do that in the mini-series.

PETER: *If X-Factor is out to find more mutants, the book could get overcrowded.*

LOUISE: We're dealing with that problem in issue #13. We mentioned the Beast's having good interpersonal relationship skills. They are at this point being tested to depths that they've never been tested before. At the complex he's got Rusty, Skids, Artie, Leech, Boom Boom, Caliban, Masque, Erg, Tar Baby, and Ape. It's the new home for the surviving Morlocks and it's driving him a little batty at this point. Some of them will be going back to the tunnels; some of them won't. That's a point I want to do stories about: what happens when you've collected too many mutants. It's a problem. I don't think they've really thought past saving them and training them. The mini-series may also deal with this.

Speaking of people they've collected, in the massacre Caliban had his face scarred in a certain way by Sabretooth. He will become an important part of both X-MEN and X-FACTOR continuity. The scars are a big clue.

PETER: Another *beard?*

WALT: *(Laughter.)*

LOUISE: His talent is the ability to locate mutants. That also is another clue.

WALT: Don't write it in any bigger letters. Those are pretty big letters as it is.

PETER: *(To Walt) During the Ice Cream Break you were saying it's a good sign if people are sometimes upset by what happens in a book, something we've been joking about all during this interview. Could you explain?*

WALT: Sure. It's really the outward sign that your readers are involved with the storylines and the characters you create. They respond to the imaginary situations in stories the same way they would respond to a real situation. But that's only really done if your work on the story is effective. Essentially, any writer of fiction creates a waking dream, and the more effective the dream, the more dreamers you can get to go along with you. Generally, to me, a reader's being upset is a sign that you have successfully made someone else into a dreamer, to take part in the waking dream.

PETER: *Considering the proliferation of books about mutants, including X-FACTOR, why do you think readers are so fascinated by super-powered mutants?*

LOUISE: I think it is because **Chris Claremont** did such a great job with mutants over the past eleven years.

WALT: With, I might add, some tremendous help —

LOUISE: — from some very fine artists.

WALT: For a number of reasons, Chris not least among them, but not the only reason, X-MEN has produced some of the finest work in the field over the past ten years, and continues, I think, to be an excellent book. And one of the ways it did this, really, was by creating almost a subculture within the Marvel Universe, a subworld that is inhabited by a fascinating array of creatures, aliens, mutants, ordinary people, you name it. It's back to the playground idea: that part of the playground suddenly expanded into a much larger area than it had ever been before. I think THE X-MEN created a doorway into a previously unexplored world that a lot of people have been able to play in.

LOUISE: Maybe it's partly identification with the characters again. I think a lot of our readers are adolescents, and during adolescence is the time when a mutant ability first manifests itself. Maybe a lot of adolescents feel like mutants to begin with. *(Laughter.)* I mean, I certainly did when I was an adolescent. And I think maybe there's also the fantasy that even though you don't really believe it's going to happen, that just maybe you might be able to wake up one day and be able to fly. It doesn't take training, it doesn't take a visit from an alien. You just wake up one morning . . .

WALT: And there you are: you can blow somebody away with your eyebeams. That big bully in class.

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mutants to begin with. I certainly did."

"I'm getting off the writing of THOR."

LOUISE: It's everybody's fantasy.

WALT: Yeah, it really is. I think that ties into it. Part of the idea of mutants is you can be one. You don't have to be bitten by a radioactive spider. You don't have to come from a different planet. You don't have to get near a gamma-ray bomb. You don't have to do any of the stuff you know you can't do.

PETER: *You're just born as a special person?*

WALT: Exactly right. You can be born special and one day you're going to wake up and discover that it's true. That's part of the dream.

LOUISE: Yeah, I think so.

WALT: I hadn't thought about that before. I think that's one of the reasons it's an effective device for creating people with powers.

PETER: *Whatever happened to HAVOK AND POLARIS, the mini-series the two of you were going to collaborate on and, Walt, why did you decide to stop writing THOR?*

WALT: On HAVOK AND POLARIS, one reason we didn't do it is because we got real busy, and it would have been hard to work in a four-issue mini-series. Also, Havok is about to become a regular character in THE X-MEN, and the storylines we had planned for the mini-series would be much more difficult to do if Havok is a character who's being used regularly elsewhere. Some of the storylines we had in mind, including the stuff I was working with in THE ETERNALS, are plotlines we'll probably pick up and use elsewhere.

As far as THOR is concerned, I'm getting off the writing of the book. By the time I finish the last issue I'm doing, I'll have been doing THOR for close to four years, and it's about time for a change. I had a very busy season over the past six to eight months, and I'd like to take some time off, to take time maybe to take stock and refuel a bit. As a result, I'm letting a number of my current assignments lapse as they run to their full course. ANIMAX is one example. THOR is another example. And then I'll just have less to do for awhile. I've got a graphic novel I want to do that's based on Russian folk and fairy tale motifs that I haven't gone to anybody yet with, but I probably will be in the not too distant future. I'd like to start on that sometime after the first of the year. That might be the next thing I do. I have some other stuff, too — I'm still up in the air as to which to choose, which to do first. But we'll see.

PETER: *So we shouldn't listen to any rumors?*

WALT: No, there have been a lot of rumors circulating for a long time on a variety of subjects concerning both myself and Weezie. Whatever they are, they aren't true.

LOUISE: We could list the rumors, so they'll know what's not true. We could start some rumors! A guy in a shop down in Maryland said that when the word came out that Mark Silvestri was doing X-FACTOR #12 that the rumors were that we had split up because working together was so horrible. That was the end of our marriage.

WALT: Oh, I missed that. I was down in the basement.

LOUISE: That was a rumor I really liked.

WALT: That's a great rumor.

LOUISE: There are all sorts of rumors about your quitting Marvel, our quitting Marvel.

WALT: That's been going around since January; I got a call from a friend of mine around the end of January asking if I were quitting Marvel. And I got the same story from four different parts of the country in three days. This was all within a four-day period. The story was either that I was leaving Marvel, or that Weezie and I were leaving Marvel together. That was a great story.

LOUISE: We blame Compuserve —

MEET THE CAST

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"We're finally getting the hang of it."

WALT: Yes, we blame Compuserve.

LOUISE: — for the lightning speed with which rumors are now being disseminated.

WALT: Right, now it's easier to get rumors around the country faster than ever before. Computers are the answer. I've just forgotten what the question is. We heard a rumor tonight from you, Peter, that we were going to be doing *all* the Batman books for DC!

LOUISE: We'd be very, very busy.

WALT: It's a great rumor. That one's not true, either, but it's a great rumor.

LOUISE: The rest are variations on those two. But if anyone out there wants to start any good rumors, feel free. We enjoy them. We collect them. Just write it down Put them on Compuserve.

PETER: *But let the Simonsons know first so they'll be prepared. They're always the last to know.*

ALL: *(Laughter.)*

PETER: *The last major question: were there any surprises when you began collaborating with each other after all this time?*

LOUISE: The only thing was that writers always grumble about some aspect of the art, no matter how brilliant the art is, and artists always grumble about some aspect of the plot. It's just the way life is. When you happen to be married to the person who's doing the grumbling, it takes a bit of working out before you realize that the grumbling isn't personal.

WALT: Well, let's name some names here, shall we? Who've you got in mind?.

LOUISE: But that was the only thing, because we're both used to each other bitching about some little thing: "Ehhhh, he changed the panel! How could he have done this? That's not the way I meant it to be!"

WALT: Well, I've found over the years that when I work with a writer I haven't worked with before, inevitably it takes me several issues to get accustomed to that writer, to the way he thinks, the way he works, whatever. Because the work that you do is teamwork, and it takes a while to pull together as a team.

LOUISE: And everyone has different styles of doing things.

WALT: You become a team with some guys faster than others. But I give it at least six issues

PETER: *Does this mean that with MANHUNTER you and Archie Goodwin were just beginning to really work as a team when it ended?*

WALT: Well, I have to say that I think working with Archie was the best team experience I've had in comics, and whatever it is we had together on that stuff was quite special. I knew it was special then. I thought maybe when we finished MANHUNTER we should have retired, we should have gotten out of comics right then. But even the stuff on MANHUNTER changed a fair amount. A lot of the early stuff was Archie: he did little thumbnails and breakdowns, and I got credit for it later on: "Oh, Simonson, thirty panels a page," stuff like that. A lot of that was Archie, or the dynamics of doing twenty pages of material in eight pages of story. It wasn't so much brilliant panelology as it was necessity being the mother of invention.

But mainly, no matter who I've worked with, even Archie, there's a certain amount of "settling in" to do with a new writer. And I'm sure it's the same for writers with artists. And the only real surprise — I guess it's not too surprising — is it's taking Weezie and me a little time to settle in.

LOUISE: We did on #13.

WALT: Yeah, I think on this last one we did. I think perhaps the fact that we're married means we got settled in within three issues instead of six.

LOUISE: I think issue #13 is the best issue yet.

WALT: Yeah, that's the best issue so far, which is interesting because in a lot of ways it's not so typical of superhero comics: there's a lot of people standing around in offices or being in diners or traveling or being in hospitals. Not so much of the standard fight scenes. Nevertheless, I think it's the best issue we've done so far.

LOUISE: The next issue's going to be even better.

WALT: I think next issue will be real good.

LOUISE: I think we're finally getting the hang of it.

"They're Claremont's stories...the best way

ANN NOCENTI

Who is Ann Nocenti? Writer of the LONGSHOT mini-series and DAREDEVIL, among others, editor of X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS, among others, and woman of mystery — since, unlike several other people I've talked to for COMICS INTERVIEW, I really don't know Ann personally. However, as they say, the work speaks for itself — and so does Ann, as she presents here her own views of the mutant bands whose adventures she edits...

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *The conclusion of this summer's "mutant massacre" plotline will result in a change in the makeup of the X-Men. What made you and Chris —*

ANN NOCENTI: What made us want to shake up the personnel? I guess, just to take the essence of what the X-Men are — outcast heroes protecting humanity — the next step further, would be to increase them as outcasts, increase that dynamic. Really up the ante — make it like a war, a combat situation. We wanted to give the sensation, when you're reading the book, that there are bombs dropping all over on stuff that used to be very solid, whether that's their home, or whatever. We wanted a heightened sense of paranoia, so that it's even hard to trust each other. And changing the line-up — new people, new blood — is like throwing wild cards into the group. That was some of the thinking behind it.

PAT: *Dealing with this paranoia, the mutant witch-hunt that's been building, do you see a point where that storyline will play itself out?*

ANN: I think it already has. I think that's why I personally felt like it was just the same old tune. It just had to go to the next level. If you, me, and a bunch of people were in some kind of day-to-day war situation, it would have to intensify to the next level, instead of just being this catch-

Eastman's unpublished shot at Ann Nocenti's (Teenage Mutant Ninja?) LONGSHOT.

to edit is to be as invisible as possible."

phrase, "Yes, humanity hates us; yes, we're outcasts; but we're doing it anyway." Eventually, that has to change.

PAT: *Here's something I saw brought up somewhere — maybe it was in the letter column in COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE — but somebody brought up the point. Why should an ordinary human in the Marvel Universe feel any more fear of Colossus than they do of the Human Torch, just because the Torch was once normal? He still has powers that set him apart from everybody else!*

ANN: I think that's literary, really — because there is no difference between Colossus and the Torch. If a guy comes into my office in flames, or a guy comes into my office and turns to steel, I'm going to have the same reaction. It doesn't really matter that I know their origins. I think the difference is in the essence of the Fantastic Four. They're a family unit, they're working within the confines of the government, they're sanctioned. It's paramilitary versus military. A guy in a cop's suit is something that you automatically trust, even if he's a scumbag. It's the role the X-Men choose to play that sets them apart — they're not government-sanctioned.

And, as a book, the X-MEN has always represented something different — their powers arrive at puberty, making them analogous to the changes you go through at adolescence — whether they're special, or out of control, or setting you apart — the misfit identity theme. None of that is part of the thematic content of the FANTASTIC FOUR.

PAT: *Do you think that analogy, that parable, of mutant power that manifests itself at puberty, is part of the reason the X-MEN has become such an immensely popular book?*

ANN: I would imagine so. It's a very universal thing. It's tied in with making the change from child — when you think you're something special — to adult — and realizing you're just part of the mass of humanity. It's tied in with all those classic themes that everyone goes through. I love the FANTASTIC FOUR, but I don't know that it strikes so potent a chord in kids.

The FF's theme is family — Reed being this intellectual giant who decided his family meant more to him than making a name for himself. That's more advanced, in a way — career versus family — that hits you later.

PAT: *What, then, do you see as the central difference between the X-MEN and the NEW MUTANTS?*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Ann Nocenti
Credits: Assistant editor: X-MEN, NEW MUTANTS, STAR WARS; editor: X-MEN, NEW MUTANTS, STAR WARS; writer: DAREDEVIL; writer-creator: LONGSHOT
Education: BA Fine Arts, State University of New York at New Paltz
Mutant Power I'd Like To Have: I don't think I'd want any of them. That's why this is fantasy.

ANN: The X-Men are the graduates — they're still in school, still in training, but it's more for day-to-day combat-type stuff. They're dealing with leadership stuff. The New Mutants screw up — a lot. A lot of them could never be X-MEN; they don't have the callousness that it takes. They're still pretty naive. Even Kitty walks a thin line between the two. She'll have an incredible problem in a combat situation and then say, "Oh, well, let's go get some ice cream." That's the difference.

PAT: *Even before the mutant massacre plotline, the plotlines between X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS could become fairly tight. Following events from one to the other got to be somewhat crazy, particularly when scheduling got them out of what should have been their chronological order. Have you, as an editor, looked at that and tried to think of ways to make that work better?*

ANN: Yeah, we're trying to do more single-issue stories, we're separating the X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS universes a little more. It got to a point where it was hard to tell the difference between the two teams. The New Mutants, especially during **Bill Sinkiewicz's** run as artist, were going off on adventures that really weren't meant for them. We were losing touch with what the book was. Now, their adventures will be more tied in with what happens on the way to the school dance, at the slumber party, on the way shopping. Things tied in with their age group and activities they'd normally be doing.

PAT: *There was a point there where it seemed the only difference between the two groups was age and powers.*

ANN: It really isn't that way anymore. You're almost going to be able to feel the way the X-Men would have handled a situation differently from the Mutants, who will invariably screw up, one way or another.

PAT: *How much of the content of an issue of the X-MEN or the NEW MUTANTS is Ann Nocenti's contribution? At the beginning, when you've got 22 blank pages to fill, how much is your contribution?*

ANN: **Chris Claremont** writes the stories; they're his stories. We go out on plot lunches, or talk on the telephone, and we talk about the characters, and about storylines — basically we just talk. I have no idea how much of it is me. Chris uses whatever he wants to. Since he's the one telling the story, it's basically him. I prefer more to stay in the background. I think the best way to edit is to be as invisible as possible.

"I designed for Billy Joel, Elvis Costello,

DEAN MOTTER

*You may know the name Dean Motter from his having written the STAR*REACH series "The Sacred and the Profane" — which series was later revised and run in EPIC, after which Eclipse decided to make it into a graphic novel. Or you may know the name Dean Motter from his being the creator and eventual writer of Vortex Comics' much acclaimed MISTER X. Creator and eventual writer? What you may not know is that in his "real" life Dean Motter is not a writer — but an artist. An award-winning artist at that! What's the story here? Why is he writing comics instead of drawing them, and will we ever get to see his artwork? COMICS INTERVIEW sent Marty Herzog to get the story...*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dean Motter
Born: 1953 in Cleveland, OH
Current Residence: Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Occupation: Art Director
Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Banana
Favorite Leisure Activity: Nothing I could talk about.

MARTY HERZOG: *Let's start very basic. What makes a Dean Motter tick?*

DEAN MOTTER: What makes me tick? That's too basic.

MARTY: *What in life has made you what you are?*

DEAN: Too philosophical. These are trick questions, right? *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *What influenced you to become what you are now?*

DEAN: When I was a child I did a lot of drawing. My father was a mechanical draftsman, so he was always working on plans and things at home. I was exposed to a lot of it. My mother is very talented as well. They both recognized at an early

Willie Nelson, and Cheap Trick . . ."

Marty Herzog, (left), with Dean in a Warner Bros. back lot.

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"I studied with Marshall McLuhan's son."

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age that I liked to draw and they didn't do anything to stifle that. Did everything to encourage it, including letting me buy vast amounts of comics — more comics than other kids were allowed to have.

MARTY: *When did you decide somewhere in your life that there was going to be some kind of a future in art?*

DEAN: I think I realized that a couple of weeks ago. *(Laughter.)*

BILL MARKS: I think it was last week.

DEAN: I fantasized about being a comic-book artist when I was in high school but I actually envisioned a fine art career. When I went to college that's what I started off with, fine art studies. Then I moved over quickly to commercial art.

MARTY: *Commercial art meaning?*

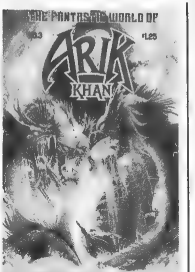
DEAN: Commercial illustration and design. Art that had a function other than strictly as a self-expression of the artist. That also made it appeal to me. You have a problem to solve, whereas the fine art studies were more therapeutic or, again, more self-expression — and that's their only genuine function as far as the artist is concerned. At least, that's what the training in college was.

MARTY: *But comic books were always there?*

DEAN: Even though it was a hobby, yeah. They followed me right through college. I did one of my term projects…it ended up being the very first issue of ANDROMEDA, which was a tabloid comic that **Bill Paul** published eventually.

MARTY: *I seem to remember something about that. That was the London Comic Book Society or something like that?*

DEAN: Yeah, MEDIA FIVE. **Bill Paul** had this tabloid in London, Ontario, called MEDIA FIVE where he somehow dovetailed Ontario educational projects and money and personnel into a comic-book fanzine. To this day I'm not exactly sure…



ARIK KHAN #3, edited by Ron Van Leeuwen, who co-edited ANDROMEDA with Dean.

MARTY: *It was something that was semi-supported by the government?*

DEAN: Yeah. I'm still not sure as to how.

BILL: I'm still trying to find out, too! *(Laughter.)*

DEAN: Actually, when I took over at MEDIA FIVE as the paste-up artist and chief letrasetter and part-time illustrator I got a lot of background in publication work. What you do for typesetting. What you do for this, what you do for that. I think that led me somehow to you.

MARTY: *At that time, what were you doing in your daytime life?*

DEAN: I was a student then, taking a course called creative electronics — which was a kind of a media course. We took everything from video tape, audio recording, holography — the whole counter-culture, intellectual, global village kind of course.

MARTY: *So, you majored in electronics?*

DEAN: Not majored in. I moved from fine art to commercial art to, finally, creative electronics, which was basically an electronic media course. That's really what it boiled down to. It eventually metamorphosized into a recording arts course. We built a full 24-track studio and…

MARTY: *Sure, I understand the natural progression from comic books to music studio.*

DEAN: Well, you can see, it's as plain…

BILL: It's as plain as walking into our office past the sound studio. *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *The sound studio, now it makes sense. But no, I don't follow the progression.*

DEAN: From art to the media? Well, to me it was a natural progression. I was restless in fine art because there wasn't enough to do there. When I started taking commercial art I got restless there, too. And when this other course opened up that offered me the chance to play synthesizer, to work with video tape, to study…

MARTY: *Are you saying that there was another passion in your life other than comic books?*

DEAN: I guess so, yeah.

MARTY: *What was that? Speak freely, Dean.*

DEAN: I'm trying to think of how to put it into words.

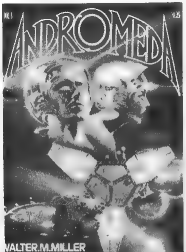
MARTY: *Music.*

DEAN: Music! Oh, okay. What a guy. I was trying to be more philosophical than that. Yeah, that was probably the thing that lured me into that course.

MARTY: *And after that?*

DEAN: Finished college. Had made enough contacts in the recording business that I…more in the film business actually, in animation. There were a couple of animation houses in Toronto that were hooked up with the college creative electronics course. When it came time to move, I just gravitated to Toronto. I was also studying with **Eric McLuhan, Marshall McLuhan**'s son, ghost writer and editorial associate.

MARTY: *Eric McLuhan, ghost writer for?*



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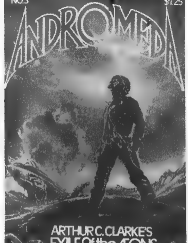

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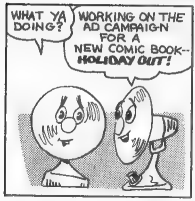
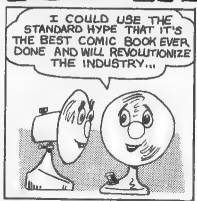
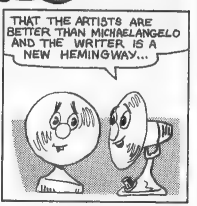
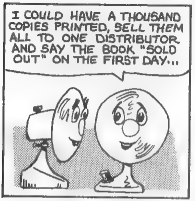
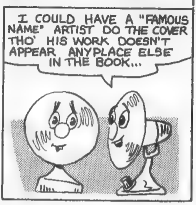
COMIC FANS

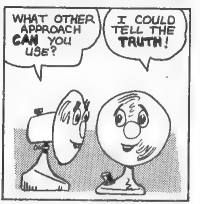


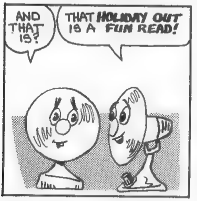


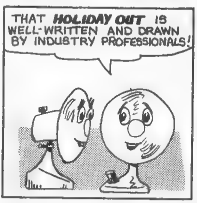


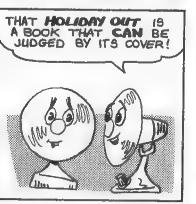


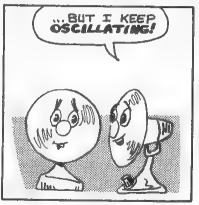












HOLIDAY OUT

AVAILABLE FROM

Renegade Press

"I got on well with Mike Kaluta."

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DEAN: Marshall McLuhan. For his father.
MARTY: *Is this a scoop?*
DEAN: No.
MARTY: *People know that?*
DEAN: Well, it's not general knowledge, but it's not a big secret. He collaborated with his father on the last few books that his father did. Eric was doing a lot of research, some writing in the last couple books. Eric was teaching out of this creative electronics course in London. When he moved back to Toronto I sort of followed him because I wanted to continue studying with him and Marshall, as well as start to work with animation. When I did move to Toronto I started to work directly with Eric and with Marshall. The final book that Marshall wrote we designed and…
MARTY: *What book was that?*
DEAN: Well, it hasn't been published. It's still tied up in the estate. But when it comes out, it'll be a book that we helped design. It's a comprehensive book on the laws of the media and how the principles of the media require creating a model for people to understand how any particular medium would work. It's rather complicated to go into, but it was a heck of a design chore.
MARTY: *Do you think it will ever see print?*
DEAN: I'm sure it will.
MARTY: *Okay, so what's the title to look for?*
DEAN: The working title was LAWS OF THE MEDIA.
MARTY: *Somehow, you came into the comic-book fandom of Toronto. How did that come about?*
DEAN: That's a good question. I'm not sure. A lot of it had to do with the connection with **Bill Paul** and MEDIA FIVE in London. He was the big fan center for Ontario. He was the hub. People gravitated to him at that time. I remember knowing people like **Jeffrey Morgan** and **Tom Robe.** Tommy, at that time, was involved with Bakka Books. I sort of gravitated to that bunch. That somehow connected me with **Ron VanLeeuwen** who owns the Silver Snail comic shop.
MARTY: *At that time he was…*
DEAN: He was selling comics in the back of Bakka out of a shoebox. *(Laughter.)* As soon as he started Silver Snail, he wanted to start his own comic book, and he approached me. Anyway, while still in Ontario fan circles, through art shows at Cosmicon, I met **Jones** and **Wrightson** and **Kaluta** and **Bode** and those people.
MARTY: *And they were the new wave?*
DEAN: Exactly. They were just coming in. I got on quite well with **Mike Kaluta** and **Jeff Jones.** At that time I wrote a piece on **Jeff Jones** for **Bill Paul.** Jeff was so impressed that he called me and asked me if he could reprint it as the forward to his collection of IDYL. I rewrote it a bit and sent it along and it was reprinted there and I think it was also reprinted in Holland, in Dutch or something, so that was kind of neat. That was the first time I saw print overseas.
MARTY: *And there was also Ken Steacy…*
DEAN: I think I met him at the Cosmicons, as well. He was living in Germany then, commuting back and forth to these conventions as an Air Force brat. Ken migrated back to Canada and naturally collided, as it were, through Bakka in Toronto. We started working on other projects. I think that's when we got involved with **Jim Wakey** and ORB magazine and started to write "The Sacred and the Profane" series that we ended up doing for STAR*REACH.
MARTY: *"The Sacred and the Profane" was originally created for ORB?*
DEAN: It was proposed to **Jim Wayley** for ORB. Jim passed on it. He rejected the concept.
MARTY: *Do you recall on what grounds?*

A back cover painting by Dean, from ANDROMEDA #2.

"For a long time religion was taboo —

You may abandon the EVA, Purifier. Victor and his aides are now in my custody. I would suspect you of being the instigator of the mutiny, but you are not that innovative.
Nonetheless, you've become intolerable, Youre arrogance, imprudence and self-righteousness pale beside your treasonous actions. You've doomed us all, Joshua!
The status program now indicates that St. Catherines will remain intact for 32 hours more. The lower region of the ship is strewn with corpses. The present count, sir, is 56.

BILL: Something about a girl looking like a bean?

DEAN: No, that was a different story. I think he just didn't see it as being mainstream enough. I think the idea of nuns in space...I think he liked the unusual aspect of that but I don't think he liked the tone that I was trying to bring to it.

MARTY: *ORB was at one time one of the best Canadian comic books, one of the first of the commercial undergrounds.*

DEAN: One of the first of what we've come to call ground-level or independent comics. I believe it predated STAR*REACH. It might have been the first. It's hard to tell. I can't think of something that came out before it. It was printing sort of non-underground material. Basically, a black-and-white comic without a heavy focus on drugs or sex or the weird Californian stuff.

MARTY: *So ORB rejected "The Sacred and the Profane" and then it somehow ended up in STAR*REACH. How did that happen?*

DEAN: I think **Mike Friedrich** approached Ken to do a story for STAR*REACH, which he did. I remember it being received rather well. Ken and I were going to bring "Sacred and Profane" out in our own magazine, ANDROMEDA, but it looked like that was going to be a long time before it ever saw print. So we decided to offer the series to Mike, and Mike jumped on it. He bought it up right away and published it.

MARTY: *Where does "The Sacred and the Profane" come from?*

DEAN: "The Sacred and the Profane" came from a lot of discussions Ken and I had. We wanted to do something a little bit more serious. We wanted to do a novel, except that nobody had really attempted a novel...something with a definite beginning and end. The focus of the story had more to do with character interrelationships within a changing situation. At least, nobody that I knew had really attempted that. We wanted to do something almost soap-operaish, but something that still had some space to it, some science fiction.

MARTY: *There are no superheroes. The women in there don't have a lot of cleavage. I don't think there was a vampire anywhere.*

DEAN: There were some monsters. And the habits look kind of like capes.

MARTY: *How could it be — besides the fact that it takes place on a spaceship — how could you think that it would be commercial?*

DEAN: A good enough premise. I thought the story was good. What I mean is, we weren't trying to say anything specifically about religion or make a big statement about it. I think I was trying to say something more about people. The story centers on one character who is going through a very traumatic period of her life. She's doubting everything she's believed in all of her life. She's come to that crossroads. And she's also in a situation where she can't turn back. Not only has she taken the vow, which is a difficult enough thing to undo, but she's left the planet. She can't go back. Can't say, "Well, I think I made a mistake. Maybe I should just go home and get married." It's a commitment and the idea of going into outer space was exaggerating the commitment, making it even more symbolic than it might have been. I think we — without trying to pat myself on the back — I think we made the idea of religion or stories about religion or stories using religion as an element less frightening to the general comic-book audience. When it did as well as it did in STAR*REACH

© 1978 Dean Motter & Ken Steacy

you didn't really go near it in comics."

If we do not find some means of evacuation we shall follow them to oblivion. The Mission is a total catastrophe, and that is your doing.
You are nothing more than a murderer, Joshua; the murderer of 215 people—all of us. I fear for you.
You've no hope of salvation. The silence of the devil condemns you. Forsaken by God, and forsaken by man, you'll stand in the inferno forever.

© 1976 Dean Motter & Ken Steacy

Ken and I redid it for EPIC magazine and, generally speaking, the response was favorable — I think it got people used to the fact that religion is a theme that can be explored, or a situation that can be explored, just as any other. It's not as frightening. For a long time it was taboo — you didn't really go near that subject in comics.

BILL: Now you have nuns that are basically Dirty Harry on Mars. I have a question. Are you, yourself, a very religious person?

MARTY: *I was going to get to that! I'm the interviewer! I was going to get to that, but I wanted to preface it before I said it!*

DEAN: Okay! Just wipe that last bit.

MARTY: *No, we won't do that. (Laughter.)* Dean.

DEAN: Yeah?

MARTY: *It's a serious question. It's a heavy question. Dean.*

DEAN: Yeah?

MARTY: *Are you yourself a very religious person?*

DEAN: Did you just think of that question?

MARTY: *No! I've been planning it for weeks! (Laughter.)*

DEAN: No, I'm not. I like to call myself a sympathetic athiest. My family is very religious. The **McLuhans**, who I'm very close to, are also very religious. They're very Catholic. My family is Southern Anglican. They're Episcopalians, as we call them down south. I have a lot of respect and a lot of love for people that have that kind of commitment. Even though I may not actually have the belief in the "supreme being" I feel very much at home with people that have those kinds of convictions.

MARTY: *So you weren't really trying to make any particular statement?*

DEAN: Not in promoting a religion.

MARTY: *Or degrading?*

DEAN: Or degrading. I was trying to respectfully say that it has value and it has enriched people's lives.

MARTY: *Portray and use it as an element of characterization?*

DEAN: Yes, because it is central to our culture, whether someone like myself accepts it or not. It's there.

MARTY: *Now, Bill, did you want to say anything else?*

BILL: No. I just saw that coming and I wanted to make sure you asked that question.

MARTY: *How did it come about that "The Sacred and the Profane" was run in EPIC?*

DEAN: Ken started the ball rolling. We had, during the course of publishing ANDROMEDA, three **Harlan Ellison** stories that we bought the rights to that Ken drew.

MARTY: *You adapted?*

DEAN: No. Ken did all of the adaptations, himself. I just handled the editorial chores of the magazine, such as they were at that time. We weren't able to publish the last of those stories. ANDROMEDA suspended publication before it saw print. Ken was making overtures towards Marvel and vice versa, and Archie picked up the rights to do that story. Ken and I, in our spare time, had been reworking "The Sacred and the Profane" with the idea of bringing it out as a self-financed book. We had rewritten the script, plugged a lot of the holes. We were both a lot more mature as we approached the story the second time around. So we had mapped out what we wanted to do with the story, and came up with a sample page from it and wrote up a story outline. Archie was already familiar with the work, in fact had praised it in print in EPIC in one of his articles in which he was covering the history of the graphic novel. He called "The Sacred and the Profane"

"At one time Dean was easily the most

one of the first true graphic novels in terms of the comic-book treatment. So Archie went for it. And we, rather than updating or rather than taking the artwork that we already had and tidying it up and correcting it and coloring it, we opted to do the whole thing from scratch again.

MARTY: *What were your roles?*

DEAN: Well, in the strictest sense I was writing and Ken was illustrating, but we cross-fertilized a lot more than that. A lot of the story ideas came from Ken and a lot of the graphic motifs came from my working out things, the different approaches to typography that we used throughout the series. Some people may look at that as window dressing but I saw it as very central towards getting people to identify the nature of the story we were telling.

MARTY: *What did you change?*

DEAN: It's pretty well the same with both editions, I would say. The only difference is that in the second edition we had the opportunity to expand it. We had a bigger budget to work with. We had more pages. We had the opportunity to work with color; not just to color the story but to actually use color as, you know, design motifs. There were other elements as well. Again, there was a lot of crossing. There were areas of the story that Ken did write word for word. There were areas of the design and graphics which were strictly mine. We both felt true enough to the statement where we could both take credit for the entire work.

MARTY: *There's going to be another edition, correct?*

DEAN: There is, at this time, a plan for Eclipse to collect the chapters that Marvel published and release them as a book. The only change is that we'll make corrections of some of the typographical errors. There will be a new cover, obviously, that Ken is going to paint. It'll be a pretty thick book. The story right now runs over 100 pages, so it'll be one of the thicker graphic novels that'll come out.

MARTY: *But for the most part the artwork is readily identifiable as Ken Steacy. Not so much the artwork of Dean Motter?*

DEAN: Right.

MARTY: *What about the artwork of Dean Motter? Where does that fit in in your life right now? What are you doing when you're not writing comics?*

DEAN: When I'm hot writing comics I'm doing artwork professionally. I am a professional designer; and that, in fact, is probably where it creeps into the comic books. The art direction and design of "The Sacred and the Profane" was my

duty. It's easy for me to define, but I think it's a little bit more difficult for the readers to define — what the difference between the art director and illustrator is. How does the art director's direction affect the illustrator in what he's illustrating?

MARTY: *How does it?*

DEAN: I don't know. *(Laughter.)* No, actually it's absolutely central to the way the work is approached.

MARTY: *But Dean Motter, daytime, is busy doing what?*

DEAN: Designing record jackets. Designing software packages. Designing posters. You name it.

MARTY: *And how did all that evolve?*

DEAN: When I came to Toronto I started working in animation, just basically doing illustrations and backgrounds. That led me to illustrating childrens' books. They were all educational books, usually early reading texts. That was a lot of fun, and that got me drawing more and more. It also gave me enough income that I could still concentrate on working with Ken on "The Sacred and the Profane." The childrens' books led, eventually, to working up at CBS.

MARTY: *Well, in between there and CBS was a music publication — one I edited, coincidentally enough.*

DEAN: Yes, that's true. Now, my mind is real fuzzy on that. *(Laughter.)* There was this funny little rag that was being published by this character who was putting on one-day conventions around town for comic-book and science-fiction buffs. CHEAP THRILLS.

MARTY: *I always liked that name. And somehow into CHEAP THRILLS ventured David Anthony Krafi doing...*

DEAN: Oh, yeah. I forgot about him. *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *Small world isn't it? And how would you describe your life at CHEAP THRILLS?*

DEAN: Chaotic. A lot of pressure. I've tried to forget as much of it as possible. *(Laughter.)* But even today I hauled them out to show one of my assistants how this whole mess got started. She said, "Is that the same **Marty Herzog?**" I had to say, "Yes, I'm afraid so." But CHEAP THRILLS was a side project that came up once a month. It was moonlighting. I was still working full time during the day at illustrating the educational series. And when the editor of CHEAP THRILLS moved to CBS Records —

MARTY: *You, too, went to CBS Records.*

BILL: So, basically, here's the point where we lie and say, "With minimal interference from his immediate superior he essentially controlled the very look and

© 1978 Dean Motter & Ken Steacy

prolific album-cover designer in Canada."

design of all of the products coming from CBS-Canada at the time."

DEAN: What he said. *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *Drop a few names here, Dean.*

DEAN: We worked on LOVERBOY. We worked on...

MARTY: *You don't have to say "we."*

DEAN: *You* worked on LOVERBOY. *(Laughter.) You* worked on **Billy Joel.** Okay, I designed promotional materials, the posters, jackets for a lot of the domestic acts as well as some of the foreign act that CBS was handling at the time.

MARTY: *Name a few that people might recognize.*

DEAN: There was **Billy Joel.** There was **Kris Kristofferson.** There was **Willie Nelson. Burton Cummings. Lions Boyd. Cheap Trick. Elvis Costello.** It's an endless list. CBS handled a lot of acts, as I remember. It was a daily chore to get all of that artwork put to bed and designed and out to the printer on time and back again.

MARTY: *If someone were to walk into a record store in the States right now, name a few albums that people might see your name on.*

DEAN: Currently? The THUNDER SEVEN Triumph album. THE NYLONS.

BILL: That LOVERBOY album is still out. It's one of the finest album covers I've ever seen.

MARTY: *What's the title on it?*

DEAN: LOVERBOY.

MARTY: *Oh, the first album.*

DEAN: It has someone smoking a cigarette with all this typewriting over top. It's a very well known image. It's even had a gum card done of it, it was so popular.

MARTY: *What happened after you left CBS?*

DEAN: I started my own studio. Within a few months I had several clients, including...well, it ended up being most of the major record labels — almost all of the major labels — and most of the independent labels.

MARTY: *Drop a few names. Don't be shy.*

DEAN: I'm just trying to think which ones to name.

MARTY: *CBS.*

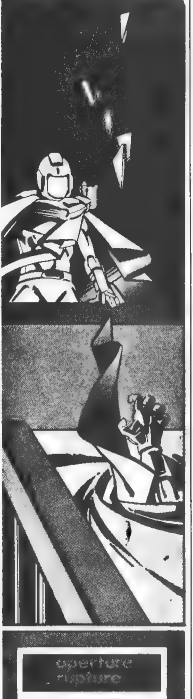
BILL: Capitol. MCA.

DEAN: Those would be the major ones. There was RCA and Warner Brothers.

MARTY: *And this was your bread-and-butter?*

DEAN: Still is to this day.

BILL: At one time easily the most prolific album-cover designer in Canada, and perhaps still.



© 1978 Dean Mosher & Kim Schmidt

"We won the Juno Award the last 2 years."

Dean designed this cover of the Nylons' first L.P.

MARTY: *And you received your first Juno nomination for what?*

DEAN: That LOVERBOY cover.

MARTY: *Okay. Now, we backtrack by saying that Juno is the Canadian equivalent of a Grammy. That was your first nomination and since then you've won Juno Awards for best album covers. You've been nominated every year since —*

DEAN: 1980. Won the Juno Award the last two years. We won the U-Know Award, which is the Canadian version of the People's Choice. We were nominated for that the past two years and won it last year. This year we're up again for the Junos.

MARTY: *Okay, so you started your own studio. What happened? I'll say what I have heard: Illustrators should not mess with business.*

DEAN: Good rule to live by.

BILL: And smart businessmen don't mess with illustrators. *(Laughter.)*

DEAN: This is my business manager and publicist to my right! *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *Is that a very succinct way of putting it?*

DEAN: Yeah. You can, at a certain level, manage your own business. The position we found ourselves in was that we had expanded kind of rapidly so that my time and attention wasn't easy to split up between business and creative. But I had to expand. I found I had to hire a business manager or another assistant, an art assistant, another art assistant, another art assistant, then a general manager, and now a personal manager.

MARTY: *Okay, but somewhere Diagram...was it Diagram?*

DEAN: Diagram Studios, the initial studio that I formed, stopped. We transformed. It had to close up operation. It had a weak foundation. It was still being run like a one-man operation. At that time, there were three people employed there and it was still more work than we could handle properly. We needed a bigger company. We needed something that had more a creative scope that could handle a broader range of graphics and packaging. We needed something that had a more stable business base. So that's when we shut down Diagram and started Modern Imageworks, of which I am the creative director and Bill is the business manager.

BILL: The chief executive officer.

MARTY: *Great title!*

DEAN: He's the only one that uses it. Everyone else calls him the bookkeeper. *(Laughter.)* Then we've got a general manager and three art assistants.

BILL: Actually, two art assistants and one assistant associate designer.

MARTY: *And this studio is now the one that's working on album covers and software packages and...*

DEAN: Advertising work. There's a very strong entertainment industry bend toward the company.

MARTY: *That's the studio, where does MISTER X and Vortex Comics fit in? Did you notice the progression there?*

DEAN: That was amazing. So slick, Marty, really. They fit in this little corner about four-feet-square right next to my desk. *(Laughter.)* Bill, just as a coincidence, happens to be the publisher of Vortex Comics.

MARTY: *Is there a tie here?*

BILL: Vortex Comics Inc. is an entirely separate entity from Modern Imageworks Design Ltd.

MARTY: *What is Dean Motter to Vortex?*

DEAN: I'm the hired help.

BILL: He's the art director.

"I had a drugfree existence in college."

MARTY: *So where does Vortex fit in? There are a number of similar faces between Modern Imageworks and Vortex. What is the connection? Spill the beans. Tell the truth, guys.*

BILL: Vortex is in the right file drawer of my desk, Modern Imageworks is in the left file drawer of my desk. *(Laughter.)*

DEAN: That's true. That's honest. It all started when I started working with Bill on MISTER X for Vortex. Bill was not employed by Modern Imageworks, or Diagram, but when I saw what a fantastic job he was doing with Vortex…

MARTY: *If he weren't sitting here would you really say that?*

DEAN: I wouldn't phrase it quite that way. When I saw the job he was doing to Vortex…*(Laughter.)* I felt he would probably be the best person to head up the business end of my organization, which was still sort of shaking around. So I brought him in as business manager of Diagram Studios. So in some ways it is just a coincidence, but in other ways it is connected.

MARTY: *Do you get paid by Vortex?*

BILL: I flip him a quarter every so often. *(Laughter.)*

DEAN: I have to buy him a case of Stroh's but he still flips me a quarter. *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *That's generous of you, Bill.*

BILL: Dean's desk is close to mine.

DEAN: It's company policy at Vortex. *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *That's nasty. God, you're mean. Okay, now — speaking of the Hernandez Brothers… Who wrote that article in —*

DEAN: The infamous COMICS JOURNAL slam on Bill's integrity!

MARTY: *No, I mean the one that was printed in MISTER X, the editorial.*

DEAN: I write the editorials and I call 'em as I see 'em.

MARTY: *How come Bill's gotten slammed because of it?*

DEAN: That's his job. *(Laughter.)* That's what he gets paid for. That's when I flip him the quarter.

BILL: No, he flips me the subpoenas. *(Laughter.)*

MARTY: *So actually it's all your fault but he's the one getting the nasty names.*

DEAN: And that's the way it should be.

BILL: Dean's the star. I go to the bank.

MARTY: *And now we're letting the truth be known. It's Bill Marks who's a nice guy and Dean Motter is the ass.*

DEAN: That's right.

BILL: In fact, "Dean's not a bad guy. He's just not a great guy." *(Laughter.)*

DEAN: I've heard that before somewhere.

MARTY: *Where does MISTER X come from?*

DEAN: Too many nights out in the speakeasys of Toronto. That's the more recent influence. The germ of the idea goes back to my college days, in journals, in the writing that I was doing back then. I was fascinated by the ideas of sleeplessness and somnambulism.

MARTY: *Drugs?*

DEAN: Not drugs. No. I had a drugfree existence in college, as strange as that might seem.

MARTY: *I've heard that about you. A lot of people that know MISTER X have wondered if the creator was somehow involved with drugs. What would you say to that?*

DEAN: I'm not sure what to say to it.

MARTY: *You don't deny it then?*

DEAN: No, I won't deny it, but I can't say that it's a point that's relevant to it.

MARTY: *I heard from one source, through my investigation inquiring about Dean Motter and drugs — a quote I like, so I want to repeat it: "The only thing that Dean has ever had up his nose is his finger." (Laughter.)*

BILL: Well, I think you should read the editorial in MISTER X #5.

DEAN: If I say that's not true…*(Laughter.)* It's like, "Are you still beating your wife?" I don't think that's worth dwelling on, but I won't deny

both personal and the experiences of friends and acquaintances had to do with my view of city life and my view of the more psychopathic strains that run through the series.

BILL: Yes, and also, you can't work in the music industry for ten years without seeing a lot of that go by your door, whether you dirty your own doorstep with it or not.

DEAN: That's right. But again, there's a parallel here to "The Sacred and the Profane," because one of the things I felt, after having tackled religion, was that I wanted to take another taboo and tackle that with a little bit more sympathy than it's been tackled with in the past. I'm not trying to do the GREEN LANTERN AND GREEN ARROW warning kind of story. I'm trying to show how it actually works within people's lives and within the culture.

MARTY: *Is MISTER X a hero?*

DEAN: No. I'd say he will be a hero, but he's not a hero now. He's the protagonist at the moment. His efforts will become heroic because as the series progresses the situation will become more and more difficult for him to live within. Even though he's — while we're talking about drugs — he's a drug addict, he's a reluctant drug addict. He doesn't want it. He has a physiological addiction to it. It's not psychological. If he doesn't get it he'll die; it's that simple.

MARTY: *What makes him tick?*

DEAN: Well, if I told you that I'd be giving away the whole series. The mystery is, as you learn in issue #5, he isn't who

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"The current artist — Seth — is a char-

IT WASN'T EASY FOR THE MAN TO RETURN TO THE CITY.
HE HAD LEFT YEARS AGO, DISAPPOINTED, SO DISAPPOINTED WITH WHAT EVENTUALLY BECAME RADIANT CITY...
THE CITY OF HIS DREAMS... THE CITY HE HIMSELF DESIGNED... WAS NOW THE CITY OF HIS NIGHTMARES.
YES, THE MAN HAS RETURNED TO UNDO THE DAMAGE HE BELIEVES HE HAS DONE...EVEN IF IT KILLS HIM.

Hernandez Bros. splash from MISTER X #1, June, 1984. Compare with Seth's art from MISTER X #6, opposite.

he seems to be — and, as you learn in issue #6, he isn't that person either. *(Laughter.)* He's a character that has adopted several personae for reasons we're not quite sure of.

MARTY: *Could it possibly be because he's had so many writers or artists?*

DEAN: I've never thought of it that way. No. It's always been intended that he would be an enigmatic character whose background you knew very little of.

BILL: Strangely enough, the works that the **Hernandez Brothers** did stuck very closely to Dean's original ideas for the character.

MARTY: *Your original concept — how did you pass it on, and why? Okay, you had a vision of MISTER X. Paul Rivoche did something about that vision and left the book. Then, if I recall, there was another stage between Paul and the Hernandez Brothers.*

DEAN: I was going to be handling it all by myself. I worked on the story and the premise for the idea for over a year before I approached Paul with it.

MARTY: *There were people who were calling MISTER X the most popular unpublished book around.*

DEAN: That's when I started working with Paul that that phrase came into existence. Prior to that I was working on it privately. I was working on several ideas that managed to mesh into one. I wanted to work with the idea of sleeplessness and sleep and dream states. I also wanted to do just a hardboiled dick story, a good detective story. I was fascinated with old silent movies and the vision they had of what the 1980s would be like. These things managed to come together about a year before I started working with Paul. Paul and I were working very closely at the time and one day it just sort of clicked in that we should be doing this thing together. He was getting more and more fascinated with **Moebius** and different comic artists and he looked like he really wanted to pursue a career for the next year on MISTER X. Consequently, the book was literally a year late coming out. But Paul and I refined those storylines into the concept that became MISTER X. Paul basically visualized it and helped get the whole thing out, but all of the notions were the same notions I'd been carrying around for years.

MARTY: *And how did you tell the Hernandez Brothers of these notions?*

DEAN: Well, first of all we had a promotional campaign that was, I think, provocative enough that it gave people a pretty good notion of what the nature of the series would be. We put out four posters. We put out a few ads. They all had very strong, striking visual elements. Those posters told the story, the combination of those posters. You can pretty well figure out what MISTER X is supposed to be about, or what it might be about. And then when the **Hernandez Brothers** came on board I sent them the story ideas for the first few issues. I sent them an overall premise of what the whole thing was about. Bill and Ken forwarded down most of Paul's working drawings, which had been distilled from our activity over the past year. It was all there and they pretty well stuck to what they were given and added their own dimension to it.

MARTY: *Were you happy with what they did?*

DEAN: I was happy with what they did overall. There were things that I would have liked to have done differently, but that's me. They were making a **Hernandez** version of MISTER X. It proved popular and it also set up some problems for me to solve when they left the series — as far as characterization and some loose ends in the storylines. And they opened up some avenues that I've now explored in the next few scripts, which I think makes the series a little bit richer. I think they put the series on a pretty solid foundation.

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acter about as mysterious as Mister X."

© 1985 Vortex Comics Inc

MARTY: *Do you believe, like, you've pulled the direction back now?*

DEAN: Well, it didn't really stray that far from what it was intended to be. They scripted based on the story elements I sent them.

MARTY: *Did you have script approval of anything along that line?*

DEAN: Not really. We had a sort of a mutual creative consultation. They were given a pretty free reign. But they knew, as well as Bill — as well as anybody — that it wouldn't be in their interest to stray too far from what had been promoted for a whole year to the public…

MARTY: *Did you have any say in choosing the Hernandez Brothers?*

DEAN: I had approval on it. I think it was Ken's idea, if I remember right. I was in Jamaica at the time and I spoke to Bill and Ken on the phone. It had just hit them that since Paul had left the book and that I'd gone to Jamaica to, basically, have enough of a holiday so that I could come back in fresh and do the book myself; I was being overly optimistic and I think Bill was going for whatever was going to be healthy for the book — I think he realized, quite rightly, that it would probably be too taxing and the book would probably be late again, anyway, if I was to do it myself. It takes a lot of time to do that book, and dividing up the time between my professional career and that, there just wouldn't be enough hours in the day. I'd have to be MISTER X to do it.

MARTY: *But from a third point of view, then, what are you?*

DEAN: The creator and the designer.

MARTY: *But you're saying here that the Hernandez Brothers did what they did and you lived with it. How do you feel about this being your creation and yet it was given away?*

DEAN: Well, given away is…

MARTY: *I mean, to give away your son!*

DEAN: Believe me, that's…

MARTY: *Ugly, bald-headed old man that he is! (Laughter.)*

DEAN: Believe me, that's the way I felt at first. That was my first reaction. But, on the other hand, the survival of that "son" is more important than his proximity. And again, they didn't stray that far from what I gave them. He didn't become something other than what he was intended to become. So yes, it did leave my direct control for awhile, but what they ended up doing with those four issues was basically what we'd set out to do anyway. So, you know, I didn't actively have to approve the script.

MARTY: *What are you now?*

DEAN: Now? I'm doing the covers. I design interior graphics for the book. I write the script. Art director would be a good term.

MARTY: *Who is the artist?*

DEAN: The current artist, as of issue #6, is a fellow named Seth. That's all I know about him. He's a character about as mysterious as MISTER X that Billy brought into the studio one afternoon. But he has a genuine love for the premise and the book and the character. I provide him with a script and he brings back the pencils and I tell him what I don't like about them and what I do like. Before he even pencils those pages, though, we sit down and we map. I go through each scene with him and I tell him what I want to see. It's almost like directing a motion picture.

MARTY: *Do you give him a tight script or do you give him rough plots?*

DEAN: I give him a tight, line-for-line script. In fact, it's broken down by pages. He follows that.

MARTY: *As an artist, do you have trouble translating your visual images into words?*

DEAN: No. I've dabbled in writing over the years. Writing "The Sacred and the Profane" was very similar: I'd write a script. Ken would do the pencils. We'd write final dialogue. We did kind of the "Marvel style." I would discuss with Ken what I did or didn't like about the artwork and the changes would be made if they were mutually agreed upon.

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"I DO want to draw MISTER X. . .!!!"

MARTY: *I guess you trust your artist.*
DEAN: Yeah. And in the case of issues #5 and #6 of MISTER X the scripts were adhered to, you know, page by page. It's not like I'm trying to be *gruppenfuhrer*. In the script I give him directions and then when I see the final pencils we make adjustments that I want to see. Then it's turned over to the inker and I'll have a similar discussion with the inker.
MARTY: *Why aren't you inking?*
DEAN: Again, it's a time problem. To ink that many pages, the day would be strained. Our ambition is to get the thing out.
MARTY: *Who's the inker?*
DEAN: A fellow named **William Diamond**. He auditioned a few pages for us and they were first class. Originally, I was going to ink issue #6 myself, to insure that my art direction and everything I was concerned about made it to the printed page. But I was so pleased with his work. He has his own ideas and his own vision for the book, too, so it's an enjoyable relationship all the way around.
MARTY: *If we can look at this from an omnipotent point of view, why doesn't Dean Motter want to draw it?*

DEAN: Time. I DO want to draw it, to be honest, and every time I've made the effort or the overture to do it, it's been, I think by Bill's wisdom, it's been pulled away.
MARTY: *"Bill's wisdom." Is there some kind of a psychological block that keeps you from. . .*
BILL: There's Bill about three feet away from Dean's desk, going, "Dean, isn't that software package at the separators yet!"
DEAN: That's right! Believe me, it's time. In issue #5 I did a lot of the inking myself, and a lot of the coloring myself, because it was left in an unfinished state when Klaus and Ty went off on their respective vacations. I will be drawing and writing and inking on one or two of the "Tales From Somnopolis" back-up feature. There is a mini-series planned, a spin-off mini-series from MISTER X, that I'll be writing, drawing, inking myself. But again, they're finite projects that I can attach a certain amount of time to. MISTER X is an on-going series that requires so much time to produce — the artwork, let alone the covers, the designwork, the scripts and everything else. It can't be a one-man operation.
MARTY: *I'll accept that, but I personally believe. . .*
DEAN: You think there's a block?
MARTY: *Yeah. If it were my creation I wouldn't want to hand it over. Maybe that's my point of view, my own interpretation or feelings.*
DEAN: I think the difference is that I've been working professionally in the commercial field long enough to know that any project that needs scheduling and has to be commercially successful is the result of the efforts of a lot of people. A one-man show ultimately ends up being as strong or as weak as the respective strengths or weaknesses of that one man.
BILL: I might inject, as well, that Dean's role, both working for Vortex and working for Modern Imageworks as an art director, sort of signifies exactly how he controls the overall vision of MISTER X. He's a tremendous illustrator. Dean can do a marvelous job of illustrating, as he does with all of those album covers he does so well. But he couldn't do all those album covers if he had to do the illustration on every one of them.
MARTY: *But I really think that an effort should be made for Dean Motter, the illustrator, to show himself.*
DEAN: Well, as I say, starting with issue #4 the covers are my illustrations.
BILL: Though we might point out that there are some guest covers coming up.
MARTY: *I'd heard those rumors. You want to drop a few names right now?*
BILL: Well, the only one we could officially drop is that **Howard Chaykin** has formally agreed to do a MISTER X cover. We're scheduling it for issue #8.
DEAN: There's a local artist, the one that I worked with last year to do the NYLONS cover that won the Juno Award. He's also agreed to do a cover, which will probably be issue #10. Alternating covers will be done by guest artists and the other ones by myself. So my vision of MISTER X is getting out there. The T-shirt illustration is mine. And I spend a lot of time on the book. We spend a lot of time during any given week on the look of the book and on the look of MISTER X.

One of Dean's unused cover concepts for MISTER X, pencilled by Dean and inked by the late Klaus Schonefeld.

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Comics Buyer's Guide
Fan Awards for 1986

1. Favorite Editor .....

2. Favorite Writer .....

3. Favorite Penciller .....

4. Favorite Inker .....

5. Favorite Colorist .....

6. Favorite Letterer .....

7. Favorite Cover Artist .....

8. Favorite Comic-Book Story .....

9. Favorite Comic Book .....

10. Favorite Limited Comic-Book Series .....

11. Favorite Graphic Novel .....

12. Favorite Character .....

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"We've turned down 2 film options already."

MARTY: *These are just spot illustrations. Comics readers out there still can't identify a Dean Motter illustration.*

DEAN: True, but the first thing any reader sees when he picks up a MISTER X is a **Dean Motter** illustration — it's right on the cover.

MARTY: *Okay. We should talk about the future of MISTER X here.*

BILL: There's the T-shirts.

DEAN: There's the buttons. There's the posters.

BILL: We've recently licensed the Swedish rights to MISTER X.

MARTY: *Could you envision MISTER X in another visual medium, let's say something with motion…*

BILL: Like maybe those 3-D GAF Viewmaster slides? *(Sly Laughter.)*

MARTY: *Come on! Drop the…*

DEAN: There are currently negotiations for the film rights to MISTER X.

BILL: But that's so far into the future. I mean, for every ten films that get optioned only one gets made. MISTER X has not yet even been optioned. We have turned down two offers for options already.

DEAN: We want the right people to make the film.

MARTY: *How would you describe the right people?*

DEAN: It has to be somebody that understands the book. The story isn't a science-fiction story, although it looks like one. It could be misconstrued as one. Someone who's at home with putting together the kind of project that's real but not real. In other words, it's set in a fictitious city of a fictitious time and it doesn't have to be justified.

MARTY: *If there were a movie made of it, would it fit into any genre or is it going to be something totally new?*

DEAN: One person suggested a musical. *(Laughter.)*

BILL: Quite seriously, one of the people we had serious negotiations with suggested a musical.

DEAN: Yeah, we were gonna get **Gene Kelly** and **Olivia Newton-John**. She was going to play Mercedes and **Gene Kelly** was going to be MISTER X.

MARTY: *Where would it fit? It's obviously not a teenage-get-into-her-pants movie.*

BILL: It's somewhere between THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI and REPO MAN.

DEAN: Yeah. It has to have a very strong style to it. It would have to be made by a director or a producer who has a style, a visual style, that is more than just their lighting or their special effects.

BILL: You see such films as DIVA — that's another good example — a film that has the same sort of style that you're going to see in a MISTER X movie. But what genre would you call DIVA?

DEAN: Or THE FOURTH MAN?

BILL: Or BUCKAROO BONZAI?

DEAN: There are films out there that are made with the style and vision and commitment to quality, but they're not easily pigeonholed.

MARTY: *I think I've run my course, unless there's something else that you wanted to say.*

DEAN: It's a dirty job, but someone's gotta do it.

MARTY: *Yeah, it's a tough life.*

BILL: Meanwhile, it's just endless nights of wild parties. *(Laughter.)*

DEAN: Gosh, I hope I get rich off this movie deal.

Join us next issue when Dean tags along as Marty turns his mike on Bill to get the full story on Vortex Comics. Consider yourself warned!

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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

INDIGNATION & ANGER HYPHED TO EASILY

Dear David:

"Elitism: leadership or rule by an elite; *also*: advocacy of such elitism."

"Elite: the choice part; *also*: a superior group." (Definitions courtesy The Merriam-Webster Dictionary.)

Once again, **Gary Groth** and THE COMICS JOURNAL have been impaled on the dreaded stake of elitism; once again, someone should point out just what a very blunt stake this is.

I have read THE COMICS JOURNAL at its most vitriolic, but nowhere have I ever seen it seriously suggested (except in **Fiore's** dragon-rating: "Forget the old lady, run over the artist and writer!") that the creation of comics should be left to any *elite*, as Merriam-Webster defines it.

I *have* seen a lot of criticism, complaint and frequent anger voiced at the willingness of too many *soi-disant* professionals to do work below the level they are obviously capable of, to accept business practices hostile to the production of good work and to condone repugnant ethical conduct on the basis that some companies are big enough to get away with it, but elitism? Would an elitist publish reviews in the JOURNAL and AMAZING HEROES panning his own house's titles? Would an elitist allow the publication of favorable reviews of titles and genres he rails against in his editorial columns? Can you imagine seeing the like in MARVEL AGE?

To demand a comic artist or writer's best effort is *not* elitism, anymore than it is to demand it of artists in any medium or workers in any craft or industry; **George S. Patton**, hardly anyone's model of a languid aesthete, once said, "To see a mistake and not correct it is to set a new and lower standard." He was talking about soldiering, but it applies to any aspect of life.

Oddly enough, there are a lot of elitists in comics. Anyone who describes himself first and foremost as just a "company man," or who implements creative decisions based on licensing consideration, rather than the demands of the material, or who denies the value of criticism in a medium with the banal, "after all, who's to say what's good and what isn't?" (I am, **Groth** is, you are, they are, we all are, if we give a damn about what we're doing), or who can accept Marvel's withholding **Jack Kirby's** artwork without speaking out, or who churns out another mutant team book or TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES spin-off because that's what's selling, is admitting there's a class of his betters out there because of his or her own self-proclaimed exclusion from that class. I've never heard **Groth** claim that he had all the answers (although he's often claimed that no one else is looking as hard) — but I've seen plenty of others in the field, in these pages and elsewhere, admit they're not even interested in asking the questions, and bitching when anyone else does.

Lastly, David, you can only have chafing when there's something sensitive there to chafe. I don't see why any professional doing the best job he or she knows how to do, and knowing it, is going to have any problems with the JOURNAL'S attitudes. Judging by the indignation and anger **Groth** is able to stir up so easily, though, there are a lot of people out there who lack that assurance, and in an industry where such an overwhelming proportion of the product is churned out to cash in on a formula that worked last time, where Green Lantern's origin story can be warmed up and retitled STAR BRAND and proclaimed as a New Universe, where artists sit in silence as the work they are supposed to be proud of is flexographically blurred onto overpriced toilet paper, there is a desperate need for **Groth** and every other fool-killer we can find, with the heaviest clubs they can carry.

Richard S. McEnroe
26 Nantucket Place
Scarsdale, NY 10583

My "chafing of elitist diaper rash" comment in the Denny O'Neill interview in #35 seems to have struck a nerve.

— Dwight Jon Zimmerman

TEPID, NON-PARTISAN PUFFERY

Dear Dave,

I can appreciate the need you have to advertise your products, but do you really need to do it on the cover of COMICS INTERVIEW? "B&W blockbuster is hot and getting hotter!" Is that what this magazine is coming down to. Puffery? Or have you finally abandoned the pretense that COMICS INTERVIEW is something more than a tepid, non-partisan version of MARVEL AGE? And while we're on the subject of the crasser things you've done, Dave, how about that strip you did a couple issues back, where you told the reader that issue could be worth $100? You were obviously trying to fool people into believing there was some sort of contest going on in the magazine (though no doubt you will innocently try to deny it, but why else run that kind of topcopy?), and when we open the issue, we learn that — yes! — in several thousand years, it could, possibly maybe, perhaps, if we and generations of our offspring are lucky, very very lucky, be worth $100. A cheap shot, Dave, and like the X-traterrestrial headline (and is spelling extraterrestrial X-etc. nothing more than a cheap way of trying to horn in on the X-Men phenomena?) unworthy of you.

By the way, should you or **Dwight Zimmerman** ever decide to turn your hands to writing, please keep in mind that "dynamicism" isn't a word.

George Ross
1879 E. Orange Grove
Pasadena, CA 91104

Is it safe to come out yet?

Actually, George, the "hot and hotter" headline was fact, not puffery — it outsold several of Marvel's Epic Comics and a great many other independents — and rather than be ashamed, I'm proud to be able to feature one of my own publications on the cover for the very first time ever in three and a half years (35 issues)!

As for the "worth $100" banner — since I wrote that editorial, there has already been a staggering surge in sales of b&w limited edition "collectibles" this past summer, as more and more fans come to the same conclusion I did. I stand by my statements.

Finally, George, you may rest assured that, come what may, I have absolutely no intention of ever turning my hand to writing! *— DAK*

A VICIOUS BASTARD

Dear Dave:

Re: the **Archie Goodwin** interview in #36. As I've explained at a few conventions, casting Archie as the little spokesman for the giant stone Thrunk in CEREBUS #82 was the only story idea **Gerhard** has come up with in two years of drawing backgrounds. As someone once said "Anything done for the first time unleashes a demon." I didn't consider the **Shooter/Goodwin** allegory 'til

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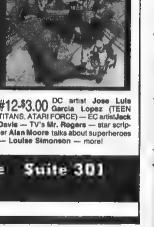

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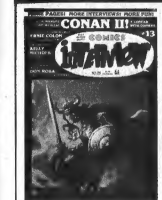

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much later. Needless to say I have nothing but the greatest respect for Archie and in no way intended anything but a little "hello" to one of my favorite New Yorkers.

Gerhard, on the other hand, is a vicious bastard and probably knew what he was doing all along.

Dave Sim
Aardvark One International
Box 1674, Station "C"
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4R2

WESTFIELD A GODSEND

Dear DAK —

It's been a while since I've written you concerning COMICS INTERVIEW. That doesn't mean I've stopped buying and reading. I'll try to do better in the future, I promise.

Up until a few years ago, there were no places in Toronto selling comics at a discount. Luckily, now, several do. The one I deal with (Red Nails) works out of his house, offering a whopping 30% off everything if you pay one month in advance. Buying 40-50 comics a month, plus graphic novels, that adds up to a pretty hefty savings. I've often thought about giving a subscription service a try, like the one **Sherill** and **Bruce Ayres** run in Madison, Wisconsin — especially before I found my present supplier last January. When you take into account the 40% exchange rate, the vagaries of the post office, postal expense and delays in receiving the books, it wouldn't be a smart economical move. Still, for those living in the U.S.A., deprived of a decent comics shop, Westfield seems like a godsend.

Finally, Dave when are you going to update your back issue ad? It goes up to #24 and, damn it, I'm missing the fabulous BATMAN ish, #31. It would make me very happy if you can let me know how much this little number will set me back.

Gary Kimber
2100 Bathurst Street, Apt. 101
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5N 2P2

It would make me very happy to have #31 available for back issue orders — but it sold out before shipping from the printer, and I've heard rumors of copies being offered for $10. and over! Guess my editorial in COMICS INTERVIEW #24 about this magazine and others like it being true collectors' items is coming to pass quicker than I expected.

It's good to hear from you again, Gary — I was wondering if you were still out there, but I should have known that — short of death or dismemberment — no one would willingly give up COMICS INTERVIEW!
— DAK

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NEXT ISSUE: Yow! Banzai BOB BURDEN — creator of the "7th most popular" comic, FLAMING CARROT — cuts loose about life, love and, of course, Communists! Vortex Comics publisher BILL MARKS converses on the pleasure of crushing the spirits of artists everywhere! Plus more — including the conclusion of the ultimate J. MARC DeMATTEIS interview — all in COMICS INTERVIEW #40.

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